



Environment Institute
of Australia and
New Zealand Inc.

EIANZ's response to Australia's 2021 State of the Environment Report

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) welcomes the release of the 2021 Australian [State of the Environment Report](#) by Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek. It is only with objective and factual data on the Australian natural and cultural environment that issues can be identified, promoted and addressed. The EIANZ acknowledges the work and dedication of the key authors and those researchers who provided the much-needed information.

The health of the Australian natural and cultural environment is not where environmental practitioners, most Australians, nor the EIANZ would want it. The health of the natural environment is generally deteriorating – from that described in the last [State of the Environment Report](#) in 2016, and in Professor Graeme Samuel's [Independent Review of the EPBC Act](#) in 2021. Every Australian depends in some way upon a healthy environment and, further, we owe it to future generations to sustain and improve our environment's health.

The report reinforces earlier siren calls that can be summarised as:

Multiple Threats + Inadequate Management = Environmental Deterioration

- **There are multiple threats** to the environment and they work together to do their damage.
- **Australia currently lacks a framework that delivers comprehensive environmental management.** The EIANZ agrees with Minister Plibersek that the country's environment laws are not working, authorities do not have adequate data on the scale of the problem and change is needed. Management of our resources inside and outside of reserves is inadequate. The current level of environmental funding indicates that our priorities are elsewhere.
- **Deterioration of the environment** is exemplified by: the number of listed [threatened] species growing by 8 per cent since 2016 to 1,918; more extinctions are expected; our coasts are under threat from extreme weather events and invasive species; near shore reefs are in poor condition; and native vegetation, soil, wetlands, reefs, rivers are in decline.

The EIANZ is convinced there is a path to move strongly towards a healthy and sustainable environment and society and the report describes some systemic and anecdotal improvements since the last State of the Environment report. Now is the time to act as if we mean it.

The EIANZ welcomes the Minister's statements on the need for national environmental law reform and to formally respond to the Samuel review. We encourage the government to act swiftly. Legislating a strong 2030 greenhouse gas emissions target, as proposed, is of importance for Australia to play its part in the global climate challenge, which in turn is accelerating our environment's decline. But that is only one step.

Choosing the straightest path and staying the course will not be easy. Many of the current threats and inadequate management practices are well engrained within Australian society, and the Australian natural and cultural environment has many complexities.



The EIANZ calls upon:

- All Australians to acknowledge the deteriorating health of the Australian environment which needs urgent care for current and future generations.
- All Australian governments to work together to modernise our legislative and policy implementation framework through a co-ordinated and focused pathway. Funding needs to be consistent with the challenge – the annual amounts suggested are affordable and required given the tangible rewards. Facts-based State of Environment reporting must continue. First Nations peoples also need better support and finance in protecting heritage and managing Country as destruction of Indigenous heritage continues at an unacceptable rate.
- Australian business and industry to acknowledge in their planning and operations the serious environmental threats that exist and do whatever practicable to eliminate them and remediate damage.
- All environmental practitioners to use their specialist skills and generalist multi-disciplinary knowledge to manage impacts and mitigate threats. Environmental practitioners can and must provide leadership in the adoption of high standards of environmental practice. They must communicate clearly to colleagues the disturbing state of affairs but also the practical path forward.

The EIANZ welcomes the Minister's undertakings of serious reform, consultation and collaboration. First Nations peoples, stakeholders and the community must be involved in decisions and processes if we are to achieve the reform necessary in environmental regulation and practice.

The environment profession is on the front line of implementing environmental protection laws and has long been concerned by deterioration in the health of the nation's environment. It is environmental practitioners who actually implement the regulations and every week see what's happening. Evidence-based practice is at the core of our values, professional ethics, assessments, and advice.

The EIANZ is committed to working collaboratively and effectively with the Australian Government. We will continue to engage on key legislative and regulatory changes and support our members and certified practitioners to implement new approaches.

About EIANZ

EIANZ is a not-for-profit, professional association for environmental practitioners from across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The Institute has a certification scheme that recognises ethical and professional practice which assures government, industry and the community of practitioners' professional standing. Our members and certified practitioners have specialist knowledge and skills in environmental systems, processes and solutions. They bring passion, ingenuity and creativity to their work. Good outcomes require good policy and good practice.