



BIODIVERSITY POLICY AND ACTION

EIANZ Position Statement

EIANZ believes:

- Nature positive actions (i.e. where nature is being repaired and is regenerating) drive positive biodiversity outcomes.
- The commitment by Australia's and Aotearoa New Zealand's Governments to a target to protect and conserve 30% of land and 30% of marine areas by 2030 (the '30 by 30 target'), including through Australia's proposed roadmap and expansion and enhancement of Protected and Conserved Areas, is an important step in preventing biodiversity loss.
- Biodiversity provides a wealth of ecosystem services fundamental to economic, environmental, social and cultural wellbeing. Ecosystem services include food, fibre and water production; climate regulation; disease control; nutrient cycling; crop pollination; and provision of spiritual and cultural benefits.
- Biodiversity loss is a critical issue facing Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and must be urgently addressed. Pressures on biodiversity are increasing, despite investments in management.
- Regulatory and planning frameworks require comprehensive reform as well as further research and management tools. Stakeholder awareness, education and consultation is necessary to protect and enhance biodiversity of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Partnerships with Indigenous Peoples will improve environmental management and protect cultural heritage.

Definition

Biodiversity is the term used to encompass the variety of all living organisms on Earth, including their genetic diversity, species diversity and the diversity of marine, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, together with their associated evolutionary and ecological processes.

Biodiversity Offsets are addressed separately to this statement in EIANZ's [Biodiversity Offsets Position Statement](#).

Background

The biodiversity of both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand is unique. Australia is one of 17 mega-diverse countries – with over 80% of its mammals, flowering plants, reptiles, frogs, fungi, molluscs and insects known to exist only in Australia. Aotearoa New Zealand is also a significant contributor to global biodiversity, with an estimated 80,000 species of native animals, plants and fungi. A comparatively large proportion are endemic.

Biodiversity is of particular and unique importance to Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have long supported and been supported by it, incorporating it into their customs, stories and way of life.

Biodiversity is not only significant for the health of the environment – it is also, culturally, socially and economically important. [World Economic Forum research](#) shows that USD44 trillion of economic value generation – over half the world's total GDP – is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services (ref 1).

Biodiversity is now declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history. A [2023 UN report](#) on the UN Sustainable Development Goals found that around one million species of plants and animals are threatened with extinction. The report identified the central causes of this crisis as habitat destruction, invasive species, overexploitation, illegal wildlife trade, pollution, and climate change.



The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. The rate of biodiversity loss in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand is no exception.

Australia has lost more mammal and plant species over the past 200 years than any other country. Although about 44% of Aotearoa New Zealand's land area is covered by native vegetation, almost 2,500 native land-based and freshwater species were listed as threatened in the decade to 2005. During the same period, the number of Australian terrestrial fauna species listed as extinct, threatened or rare rose by 41 per cent to a total of 169. Extinctions alone now total 116 species and counting.

There are diverse conservation measures internationally (e.g. the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and Ramsar convention), nationally (e.g. the Australian *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the New Zealand *Environment Act 1986*), provincially and locally, and through voluntary undertakings. However, the trend of biodiversity loss largely continues unabated.

Role of decision-makers

Biodiversity must be conserved at all levels and scales – that is, structure, function, and composition should be conserved at site, regional, state, national and international scales.

Australia's and Aotearoa New Zealand's governments should extend their national and international actions and improve the design and implementation of international biodiversity and conservation agreements to protect biodiversity across borders and migration routes.

The Environment Institute calls on decision-makers at all levels of government and industry to:

- Formally protect representative and adequate examples of species and ecosystems in national reserve systems.
- Develop and implement action plans for threatened species and ecosystems.
- When conservation planning, incorporate a landscape-level approach and connect across different land tenures, including private lands.
- Develop the knowledge required for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and improve understanding of Australia's and Aotearoa New Zealand's unique ecological systems and species.
- Develop consistent, quality baseline data across users and adopt national systems for assessing the status of biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- Set realistic and meaningful indicators and targets of biodiversity status and improve coordinated reporting on protected and off-reserve areas.
- Design, implement and adequately resource policies, legislation and regulations that protect and enhance biodiversity, recognising that biodiversity and human wellbeing are inextricably linked. This will require redressing the current chronic underfunding of biodiversity conservation, which is impacting the scope and effectiveness of action.
- Improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and implement adaptation and mitigation actions.
- Ensure policies and practices in designating and managing protected areas consider the impact of climate change on the distribution of native and introduced species, species composition and ecosystem dynamics.
- Champion the rights of, connection to and stewardship of biodiversity by Indigenous Peoples.
- Assist landowners in actively managing and enhancing biodiversity, while accelerating studies on threatened species and further assessing threatening processes.
- Ensure appropriate controls are incorporated into policies and regulations that allow or promote land use change and use of resources that also impact the fate of flora, fauna and habitat.
- Implement requirements for **Biodiversity Net Gain** (similar to requirements in the United Kingdom for 10 per cent BNG for all planning approvals) across Aotearoa NZ and Australia to drive nature positive outcomes.



Policy into practice

EIANZ has a clear interest in environmental protection and sustainable development and in applying objective professional standards for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

EIANZ's role is to:

- **Educate** – Train and certify environmental and sustainability professionals to build capacity and capability that addresses biodiversity issues.
- **Engage** – Work with peer institutes, associations, and Indigenous Peoples to promote sound outcomes and accelerate improved biodiversity management.

EIANZ encourages environmental policymakers and practitioners to undertake the following:

- Consider biodiversity from inception in all environmental planning and impact assessments based on a wide range of evidence including science and Traditional Knowledge and embed biodiversity-related risk assessment into strategic decision-making and planning.
 - Include national or regional contexts when undertaking project- and site-specific decision-making.
 - Develop consistent but flexible ways of evaluating biodiversity change, accounting for the impact of external influences such as climate.
 - Ensure regional natural resource management bodies include spatial and temporal biodiversity issues in their work.
 - Use consistent decision-making processes and consider a range of spatial and temporal scales and performance measures at all analysis levels and adopt adaptive management approaches to mitigate inherent risks and uncertainties.
 - Strengthen biodiversity assessment and management professionalism, capacity and capability in industry and government.
 - Develop best practice guidelines and competency frameworks.
- Estimate and describe the economic, social and cultural benefits of protecting and enhancing biodiversity to promote community understanding of the value and requirements of biodiversity conservation.
 - Foster information sharing networks (whilst recognising natural catchment or bio-regional boundaries) across governments, non-government organisations, land and water users and the public.

About EIANZ

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) is Australasia's leading body for environmental professionals. We represent over 3,500 members and Certified Environmental Practitioners across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Our members are at the forefront of environmental issues and come from a range of technical disciplines including science, policy, law, engineering and economics.

The Institute is responsible for the leading environmental certification scheme in Australasia, the Certified Environmental Practitioner (CEnvP) Scheme. We also provide professional development to environmental professions and advocate for sound environmental policy and ethical practice.