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10 April 2024

**Australian Academy of Science submission on the
*Inquiry into Australia's extinction crisis***

The Australian Academy of Science welcomes the opportunity to contribute expertise and advice to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee's Inquiry into Australia's extinction crisis. This submission should be read as an update to the Academy's previous submissions to the Inquiry made in September 2022 (submission number 45) and September 2018 during the 45th Parliament (submission number 156).

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act) has failed.

Australia's system for managing and abating threatened species and preventing species extinction under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) has failed. The Academy continues to support the implementation of binding national environmental standards, the establishment of the independent agency Environmental Protection Australia (EPA), and the establishment of Environment Information Australia (EIA).

The Academy is actively participating in the Government's implementation of the Samuel Review recommendations, including providing expert advice on the National Environmental Standards. The Academy is currently participating in consultations on the Nature Positive legislation and related reforms.

Meaningful engagement with the scientific community is essential to ensure that reform decisions are underpinned by evidence and subject matter expertise. The Academy's Fellowship includes some of Australia's leading scientists in relevant fields, with the capacity for harnessing Australia's broader expertise in environmental sciences.

Nature Positive legislation must encompass regional planning and cumulative outcomes and ensure positive environmental outcomes.

As noted in the previous submissions, the EPBC Act has proved ineffective against the major Key Threatening Processes in Australia, which include climate change, habitat clearing, invasive species, and inappropriate fire regimes. The EPBC Act fails to consider the complexity of the issues, the cumulative nature of their impacts, their broad scale, or the amplifying effect of multiple inter-connected stressors. These threats will require significant investment to address, and full cooperation with State and Territory governments.

The Nature Positive reforms aim to address some of these shortcomings. For example, regional planning approaches that address cumulative impacts are included. These approaches are urgently needed and must be embedded in the National Environmental Standards and the Nature Positive legislative suite.

However, regional planning cannot be relied upon exclusively as a mechanism to address cumulative impacts. Regional planning will be slow, and there will be a significant time lag between the adoption of the legislative reforms and the implementation of regional plans across Australia.

Other mechanisms must be considered. For example, decision-makers should be required to identify the overlapping impacts of projects in environmental assessments and approval processes. This requirement should be embedded in the National Environmental Standards and supported by robust systems and processes that provide access to reliable, timely, and evidence-based information.

To discuss or clarify any aspect of this submission, please contact Chris Anderson, Director, Science Policy at