



**Biodiversity
Council**

2025 Impacts Report

Biodiversity Council, Dec 2025

Giant Kelp at Port Davey, Tasmania. Image: Stefan Andrews
courtesy Great Southern Reef Foundation

Acknowledgements

The Biodiversity Council acknowledges the First Peoples of the lands and waters of Australia, and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and future and expresses gratitude for long and ongoing custodianship of Country.

For more information

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How to cite this material:

Biodiversity Council (2025). **2025 Impacts Report**, Dec 2025. Report. Biodiversity Council. Melbourne, Australia.

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¹Biodiversity Council, ²The University of Melbourne, ³The University of Queensland, ⁴RMIT University, ⁵Yuin man.

Graphic design: Jaana Dielenberg



The Biodiversity Council brings together leading experts including Indigenous Knowledge holders to promote evidence-based solutions to Australia's biodiversity crisis. It was founded by 11 universities including its host the University of Melbourne, with support from The Ian Potter Foundation, The Ross Trust, Trawalla Foundation, The Rendere Trust, Isaacson Davis Foundation, Coniston Charitable Trust and Angela Whitbread.



CEO's message

I'm proud to share a snapshot of the extraordinary impact we achieved together in 2025, strengthening our position as Australia's trusted, independent expert voice for biodiversity.

This year, we made 20 submissions to federal and state environmental policy and planning processes. Our evidence and recommendations influenced outcomes across biodiversity legislation, having an instrumental role in hardwiring critical safeguards into the new EPBC Act, such as the register of protected matters. We also shaped renewable energy planning, invasive species governance, forestry standards, and major project decisions.

We helped shape South Australia's statewide cat strategy and improvements in national environmental law reforms and other policies across the country. Collectively, these impacts will deliver genuine, on-the-ground benefits for biodiversity, from strengthened legal protections to improved environmental decision-making.

We supported the development of the Indigenous-led South Australian Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Alliance (SAALSMA), which has now secured initial funding and will amplify Aboriginal voices in environmental decision-making. We also championed Indigenous-led biodiversity research.

We launched Australia's first Nature Media Centre, in close collaboration with the Australian Land Conservation Alliance and the Pew Charitable Trusts, to create new champions for biodiversity and to enable more stories about nature to be told in more places.

We launched 15 curriculum-aligned "Biodiversity in Action" lessons with Cool.org. Our media and social media reached 21 million people, helping inform them on key biodiversity issues and how to take practical actions for nature in their daily lives.

We rapidly mobilised expertise to lead during moments of national urgency, including South

Australia's harmful algal bloom, where we played a key role in helping the community to understand the issues and responses and strongly influenced the Senate Inquiry's findings and government action.

We prompted new government investment for threatened freshwater fishes, highlighted the urgent need to secure the only known wild population of Melbourne's critically endangered Grassland Earless Dragon, and released new research with the Australian Marine Conservation Society on the investments needed to prevent marine extinctions.

The Council also took a critically important step, becoming a stand-alone registered charity with DGR status, following three years of incubation within the University of Melbourne. The Council now stands as an independent expert voice for nature, working in close partnership with the University sector and other experts and organisations in the conservation field.

Thank you to our out-going advisory board members John Thwaites AM, Prof Bradley Moggridge, Jenny Gray and Cullen Gunn. And thank you to the University of Melbourne for supporting us through our establishment.

Thank you to our supporters, board, partners, and the extraordinary experts across our universities and Indigenous networks. Together, we will continue to elevate evidence, challenge misinformation, and champion the protection of nature and Country with determination and optimism.

Yours for nature,
James Trezise



Moore Reef. Image: Holobionics
CC BY SA 4.0 via WikiCommons

2025 by the numbers

- **39 councillors** – experts in science, Indigenous knowledge, law, policy, economics and behaviour change
- **20 formal policy submissions**
- **4 parliamentary inquiry appearances** and 3 Independent Commission presentations
- **8 government policies, strategies and decisions**, and **1 Industry standard** influenced
- **EPBC: 2 reform ammendmants shaped**, 2,200 factsheet views, 1,065 webinar registrants
- Critical action prompted for **5 imperilled freshwater fish species**
- **15 curriculum-aligned ‘biodiversity in action’ lessons**, available to 220,000 teachers.
- **727 people sent 18,000 emails** to 2025 federal election candidates asking for more for nature
- **12 reports and factsheets** presenting solutions to biodiversity loss
- **61 news stories and media releases**
- **21 million Australians reached** through media and social media
- **Almost 3000 media articles** generated with an advertising equivalent value of \$11.5 million
- **22,401 social media followers**, 1.4 million video and post views, 51,000 social engagements
- **120,000+ website page views by 55,000 users**
- **200,000+ emails** sharing the latest biodiversity science and policy news
- **100+ biodiversity experts and community members** provided media training



(Above) Biodiversity Council member Professor Jan McDonald discussing EPBC Act ammendmants on ABC News. (Below) Exerpts from our federal election policy analysis on ABC.

Where Labor and the Coalition stand on nature and environment policies this federal election

By environment reporter Peter de Kruijff

ABC Science Environment

Thu 1 May

Irwin's turtle is one of more than 2,000 Australian species under threat of extinction. (Naturalist: Allan Lugg, Irwin's turtle, CC BY-NC 4.0)

James Trezise from the Biodiversity Council says the Coalition policies do little for the environment. (ABC News: Claire Moodie)

The Biodiversity Council, formed by 11 Australian universities to provide expert advice on biodiversity issues, [has graded the major parties' policies and given the Greens top marks.](#)

Former Queensland chief scientist and Biodiversity Council co-chair Hugh Possingham said Labor's nature policies were 'minimal' and the Coalition's were a 'failure'.

In contrast, Professor Possingham said The Greens' policies, if enacted through a balance of power, could have meaningful improvements for Australia's environment.

Biodiversity Council grades

LABOR	COALITION	THE GREENS
✓	✓	✓

Why we exist and how we work

Australia is in the midst of a biodiversity crisis, with nature declining faster here than in any other developed nation. This has serious consequences for our culture, economy, health and climate resilience. Yet many Australians are unaware of the scale of the crisis or how everyday choices—personal, political and commercial—shape nature’s trajectory. Weak political will, limited public pressure, entrenched interests and widespread misinformation continue to impede progress. The Biodiversity Council exists to address these systemic barriers.

Our theory of change is: when more people understand the biodiversity crisis and are given the confidence, actionable knowledge, clear advice, and tools to act, more people will take personal action and put pressure on governments and businesses. When governments and business feel community and consumer demand and ballot box pressure, they will better care for nature. When governments regulate, businesses transform, and when businesses lead, governments will follow. Our thought leadership, evidence synthesis, and tangible advice strengthen the conservation sector by underpinning strategic advocacy. See our Theory of Change figure.

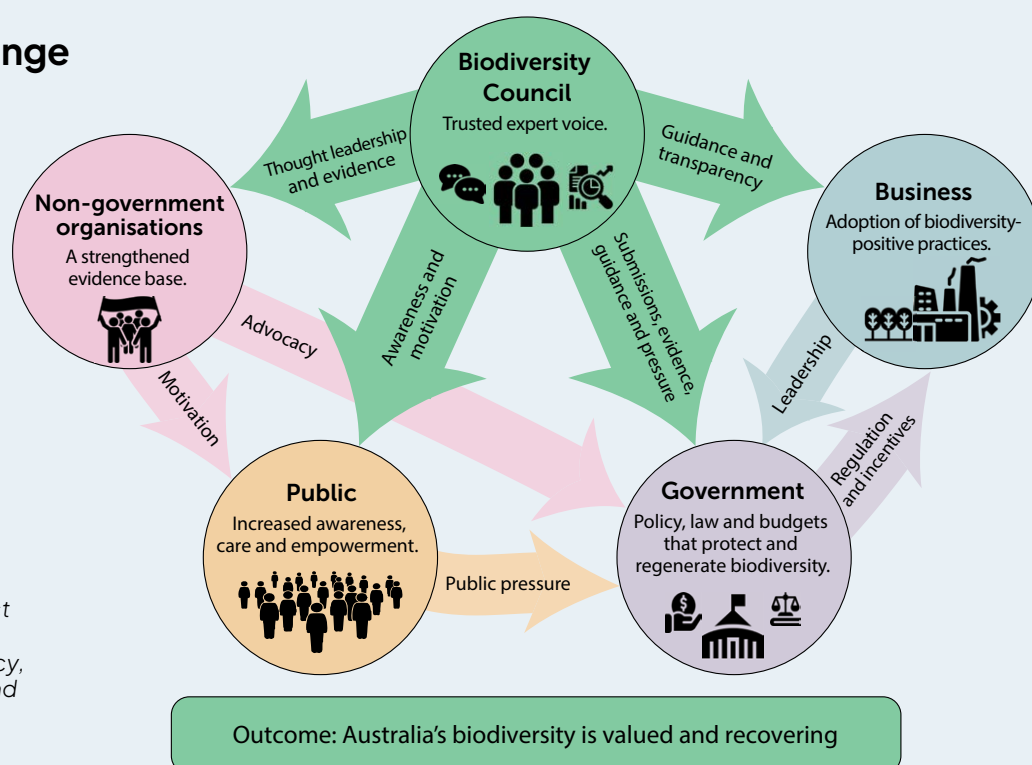
As our biodiversity concerns survey with BehaviourWorks Australia at Monash University shows, scientists are the most trusted environmental messengers. Our unique strength lies in rapidly activating leading experts from universities

and the broader research sector, including Indigenous leaders, to respond to nationally significant issues. We achieve impact by combining scientific rigour with strategic communication and policy engagement—making our work visible, authoritative and action-oriented.

As Australia’s independent expert voice for biodiversity, with the support of our generous donors and partners, we drive change by:

- Mobilising experts, particularly from universities and Indigenous backgrounds
- Building public demand and political will for evidence-based decisions
- Translating complex science into accessible narratives and tailored outputs
- Supporting Indigenous-led models of stewardship
- Providing high-quality policy submissions, evidence, and analysis
- Engaging national media and digital platforms at scale
- Countering misinformation and vested interests
- Empowering community champions and youth to act for nature

Our Theory of Change



Our key program areas interact to bring positive behaviour change, urgently needed policy, law and budgetary reforms, and changes to business practice.

Impact Highlights 2025

Strengthening Indigenous-Led Land and Sea Management

The Biodiversity Council is committed to elevating Indigenous knowledge, leadership and governance as essential pillars of effective biodiversity management. In 2025, we supported several initiatives designed to strengthen Indigenous-led stewardship and ensure Country and culture are embedded in national biodiversity decision-making.


Southern Australian Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Alliance (SAALSMA)

In 2025, the Biodiversity Council supported the establishment of the Southern Australian Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Alliance (SAALSMA), a newly formed non-profit organisation dedicated to advocating for, facilitating and brokering collaboration and knowledge exchange among southern Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders. SAALSMA's mission is to advance Aboriginal environmental and economic priorities across policy, research, management, education and capacity strengthening.

Through communications support and early partnership development, the Council helped strengthen SAALSMA's visibility, including amplifying its public statement on the harmful algal bloom in South Australia, which emphasised the need for Aboriginal inclusion and culturally grounded decision-making. SAALSMA has now secured initial funding and appointed an Executive Officer—an important step toward coordinated Indigenous-led stewardship across southern Australia. The Biodiversity Council is hosting SAALSMA while the organisation's structure and governance are established.

Commissioner for Country Proposal

Collaborating with a range of Indigenous and conservation organisations, including the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance and Indigenous Desert Alliance, the Biodiversity Council has helped support the development and national advocacy for a Commissioner for Country—a proposed independent First Nations-led statutory role dedicated to protecting and restoring land, water and biodiversity through cultural authority.



Southern Australian Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Alliance (SAALSMA)

Strategic Business Development Oct 2024

Introduction

The Southern Australian Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Alliance (SAALSMA) is a newly formed non-profit organisation dedicated to advocating for, facilitating, and brokering collaborations and knowledge exchange among southern Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders. Our mission is to advance southern Aboriginal environmental and economic priorities.

SAALSMA aims to work with its members across the five themes of policy, research and development, management, education and capacity strengthening, and sustainable Aboriginal economic growth by brokering and networking strategic and applied support, thereby connecting them with key stakeholders, resources, and opportunities to advance their environmental stewardship and economic initiatives.

Establishment plan

Phase 1: Initial Setup (0–12 months)

Objectives:

- Establish central governance and member representation.
- Secure initial seed funding.
- Begin recruitment for key positions.

Total Budget for Phase 1: \$455,000

Contact:
info@SAALSMA.org.au

Objectives and Themes

1. Policy
Objective: Develop, promote, and broker policies that align with southern Aboriginal priorities for sustainable land, water, and sky management and economic growth opportunities that integrate cultural practices and First Nations Science.

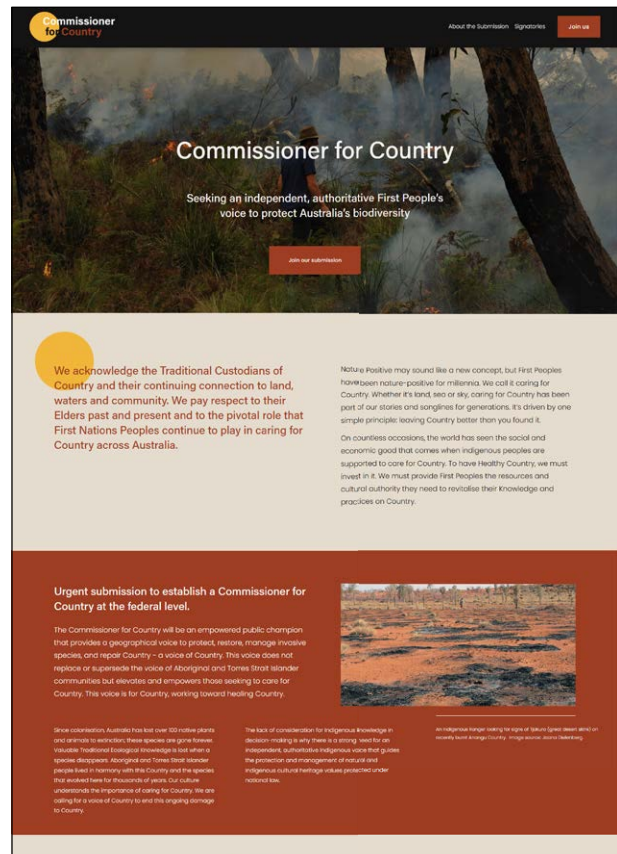
2. Research and Development
Objective: Broker knowledge, industry, government and philanthropic relationships to secure funding to support southern Aboriginal-led research priorities using First Nations and Western Science. Facilitate stakeholder partnerships for sustainable environmental outputs and southern Aboriginal economic growth opportunities.

3. Management
Objective: SAALSMA will provide strategic support and resourcing through networks and project management to facilitate the development of holistic approaches to Caring for Country.

4. Education and Capacity Strengthening
Objective: Ensure the implementation of succession planning for the education and capacity strengthening of current and future southern Aboriginal generations.

5. Sustainable Aboriginal Economic Growth
Objective: Support the development of sustainable economic growth opportunities for Aboriginal communities.

The SAALSMA business proposal has been successful.



Commissioner for Country

Seeking an independent, authoritative First People's voice to protect Australia's biodiversity

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay respect to their Elders past and present and to the pivotal role that First Nations Peoples continue to play in caring for Country across Australia.

Nature Positive may sound like a new concept, but First Peoples have been nature positive for millennia. We call it caring for Country. Whether it's land, sea or sky, caring for Country has been part of our stories and songlines for generations. It's driven by one simple principle: leaving Country better than you found it.

On countless occasions, the world has seen the social and economic good that comes when indigenous peoples are supported to care for Country. To have Healthy Country, we must invest in it. We must provide First Peoples the resources and cultural authority they need to revitalise their knowledge and practices on Country.

Urgent submission to establish a Commissioner for Country at the federal level.

The Commissioner for Country will be an empowered public champion that provides a geographical voice to protect, restore, manage invasive species, and repair Country—a voice of Country. This voice does not replace or supersede the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities but elevates and empowers those seeking to care for Country. This voice is for Country, working toward healing Country.

Since colonisation, Australia has lost over 100 native plants and animals to extinction. These species are gone forever. Australia's Traditional Ecological Knowledge is well under a species' lifespan. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples work in harmony with the Country and the species that sustain them for thousands of years. Our culture understands the importance of caring for Country. We are calling for a voice of Country to end this ongoing damage to Country.

The lack of consultation for Indigenous knowledge in decision-making is why there is a strong need for an independent, authoritative Indigenous voice that guides the protection and management of natural and Indigenous cultural heritage values protected under national law.

An Indigenous ranger seeing the signs of Salinity (green dead shrub on healthy brown orange Country). Indigenous Ranger Meeting.

Part of the new Commissioner for Country website.

The Commissioner would amplify, not replace, community voices, ensuring Indigenous perspectives shape major environmental decisions. Acting as a public champion for Country, the role would support Indigenous land managers, provide independent advice to government, and advocate for culturally significant species and ecosystems. By reporting directly to parliament, the Commissioner would embed First Nations leadership at the heart of national environmental governance.

Indigenous-Led Research and Storytelling

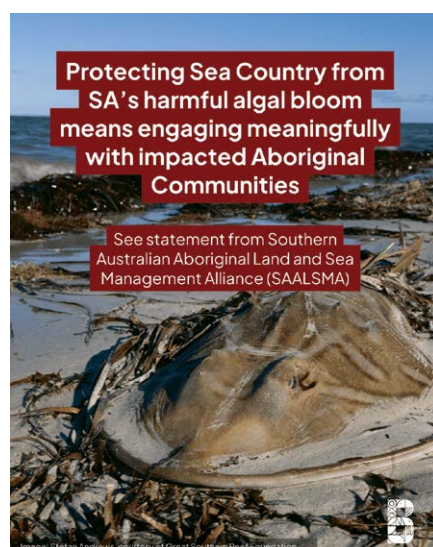
In 2025, we continued to amplify Indigenous-led biodiversity research through targeted media and social engagement. A key highlight was our video celebrating projects featured in the Wildlife Research Indigenous-led research special collection, which included insights from Lead Councillor and Yuin man Dr Jack Pascoe. The video and accompanying social media campaign showcased culturally grounded research approaches and highlighted the vital role

of Indigenous people in biodiversity research and conservation.

We also developed and shared content celebrating culturally significant entities, helping connect broader Australian audiences with Indigenous perspectives on the relationships between culture, Country, and species.



Above: A YouTube recording of an interview of Yuin man and Biodiversity Council Lead Councillor Dr Jack Pascoe about Indigenous-led research. Below some of our 2025 social tiles.



Centering the community as agents of change

Benchmarking community support for nature policies

In 2025, we continued our collaboration with Monash University's BehaviourWorks Australia to survey the Australian community on attitudes toward environmental issues and policies. The results have been valuable to demonstrate high levels of community support for government investment in nature care, strong nature laws, and cat containment. In February, they were critical to countering a noisy anti-national parks campaign begun by a 4WD social media influencer, by showing that the vast majority of people, regardless of political alignment, support the establishment of new national parks. The findings have attracted strong attention from MPs, governments, the environment sector and the media. The findings have also been regularly cited by members of the community in letters to newspapers, demonstrating that the findings resonate strongly. Over the past 12 months, the findings generated 130 media stories, reaching 900,000 people, with an advertising-equivalent value of \$700,000.



Giving the community the motivation and tools to act for nature

Our social content and newsletters regularly empower Australians with practical, everyday actions to help biodiversity where they live. Through engaging videos, reels, carousels and simple evidence-based tips, we showed people how to create wildlife-friendly gardens, build habitat for native bees, establish verge gardens that support urban nature and climate resilience, and reduce threats to local species. We helped communities understand the impacts of roaming pet cats and light pollution on wildlife and encouraged small changes—like turning off unused outdoor lights. Seasonal campaigns encouraged families to choose nature-safe decorations at Halloween and Christmas, reducing waste and harm to birds and nocturnal animals. These posts consistently inspired strong engagement, giving communities motivation and easy tools to take meaningful action for biodiversity every day.



The Biodiversity Council's news stories, social media posts and videos on how to take action for nature in your daily life and the benefits are among our best performing.





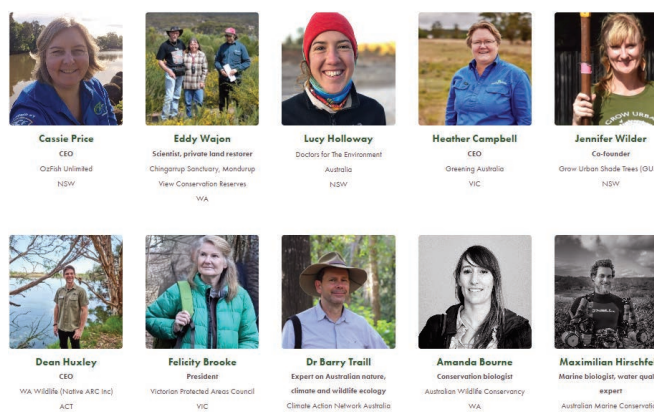
Nature Media Centre

In 2025, the Biodiversity Council, PEW Charitable Trusts and the Australian Land Conservation Alliance collaborated to found the Nature Media Centre (NMC). It is a non-partisan resource that aims to increase the volume and quality of nature stories reaching the public, to strengthen awareness of Australia's unfolding environmental crisis and support for evidence-based solutions. It also aims to reduce mis- and disinformation about nature in the media.

This national platform has now begun connecting journalists with Australia's vast network of environmental champions—community advocates, volunteers, Indigenous Knowledge holders, scientists, conservation leaders and other experts. A growing spokesperson media portal serves as a rich library of trusted talent, enabling compelling, well-researched stories that educate, inspire action, reveal local on-the-ground realities, and explore the complexities and solutions to environmental decline.

The NMC also provides communication and media training to equip passionate community members with the skills and confidence to participate in public discourse and tell stories about nature in ways that connect with new and different audiences. Fifty people have already been trained through the NMC's pilot training program.

Since its launch in October, through story identification, targeted pitching, and the spokesperson portal, the NMC has already generated 1500 nature news stories. Coverage includes stories on soil health, wildlife-safe road design, tiny forest habitat projects in urban areas, and climate change and marine temperature impacts on seabirds. The Nature Media Centre also supported the Indigenous Desert Alliance to highlight the importance of caring for desert Country during their trip to the COP30 climate talks in Belem, Brazil.



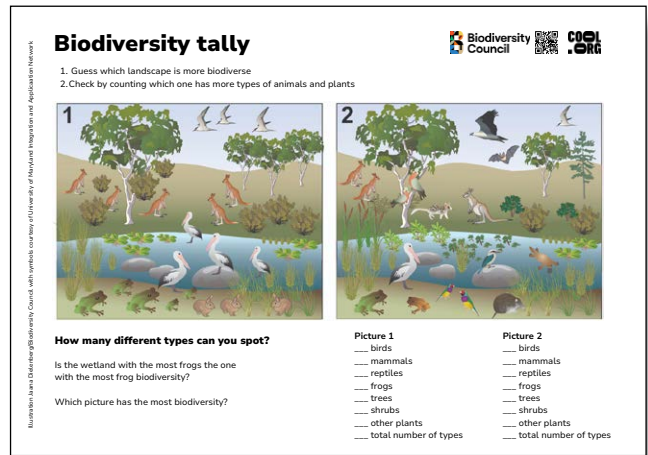
(Top) Launch of the Nature Media Centre at the Australian Land Conservation Alliance Conference in October. Image: ALCA. (Above) A sample of some of the spokespersons in database.

Biodiversity in Action school lessons

This year, the Biodiversity Council began collaborating with Cool.org to bring curriculum-aligned “Biodiversity in Action” lessons into classrooms across Australia. Cool.org brings education resource development expertise and a network of 220,000 Australian educator members, while the Biodiversity Council provides guidance on biodiversity topics, evidence, and actions that young people and their families can take that can add up to meaningful change for their environment. In November, we launched the first set of lessons and resources for Foundation to Year 10. The lessons received more than 300 downloads in just a few weeks, with many more expected before the new 2026 school year. The topics in the “Biodiversity in Action” series include culturally significant species, responsible pet ownership, local biodiversity habitats, light pollution, the climate resilience and mental health benefits of biodiversity and Country-centred learning.

Thank you to the James N. Kirby Foundation, Purves Environmental Fund, the Garry White Foundation, the Hugh D.T. Williamson Foundation, and Wedgetail for generously funding the development of these lessons.

We were delighted to engage with innovative young thinkers from St Jude’s Primary School who developed solutions to reduce light pollution impacts, and proudly facilitated their presentation at the Australasian Dark Sky Alliance’s Valuing Darkness conference—giving these young leaders a national platform to share their work and inspire scientists to better engage young people in nature-positive solutions.



One of the classroom ready resources for teachers.

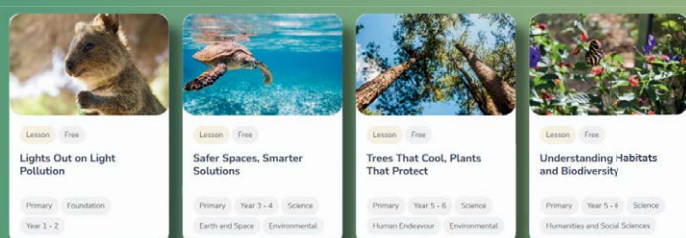


The team from Cool.org, the Biodiversity Council and The Conversation at the launch of the lessons at Melbourne Zoo.

Units of learning



Primary Lessons



Professional Learning

This course shows you how to work with First Nations communities and knowledge holders to create a school garden that is both biodiverse and culturally respectful.



Secondary lessons



Youth engagement – collecting evidence to guide our strategy

Young people are pivotal for Australia's environment both today and in future. Yet, our Biodiversity Concerns Survey data has flagged that young Australians (18–25) are the least likely age group to engage in biodiversity-positive behaviours. To understand why and the barriers to their action for nature, we commissioned Monash University's BehaviourWorks Australia to conduct social research involving focus groups of young people.

The results showed that many young people have a limited understanding of biodiversity and how to take action, and may feel disempowered by factors such as unclear social norms and being a renter. Nonetheless, they want clear, practical guidance on what they can do. The focus groups identified cost-of-living, mental health, and climate change as among the greatest concerns of this group, and so a recommendation is to show young people how biodiversity is important to climate resilience and supports mental health and wellbeing.

We communicated these findings to the broader conservation sector at the Australian Land Conservation Alliance conference in November, as part of a workshop on youth engagement in nature care, led by the youth-led groups Co-Exist Australia and Intrepid Landcare.

Bees and Blossom's Clancy Lester collaboration

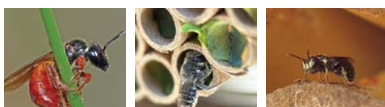
The Monash work also pointed to the value of collaborating with young social media influencers to create engaging content that provides practical guidance and inspiration and sets biodiversity-positive social norms. To this end, we collaborated with creator Clancy Lester to produce a DIY bee hotel video and factsheet that provided communities with simple, biodiversity-positive actions to support native pollinators—widely promoted across our social media and newsletters. In 2026, we will build on this successful pilot by collaborating with more youth content creators.



So you've decided to make your own bee hotel, congrats! Native bees in your local area are buzzing with anticipation. But first, you need to choose one of three hotels to build. Check out the kinds of bees each one attracts.

Reedy hotel

For bees that love the hollows inside dead pithy flower stems, reeds and untreated bamboo.



Biodiversity Council's Jaana Dielenberg joined younger nature advocates Mackenna Minstrell and Monique Jeffs to talk about youth engagement in nature action on ABC Radio.



The videos produced in our collaboration with social media influencer and nature champion Clancy Lester from Bees and Blossoms on how to make your own bee hotel have been watched more than 45,000 times.

Providing guidance and creating demand for better environmental laws

The Biodiversity Council has established itself as a leading authority on Australia's environmental laws and strategies, and the reforms needed to halt and reverse nature loss. We have leveraged our Biodiversity Concerns Survey with Monash University to demonstrate strong public backing for stronger protections. High-quality submissions underpin this work, with priority issues amplified through reports, fact sheets, media releases, news stories, webinars, and videos.

2025 Federal election

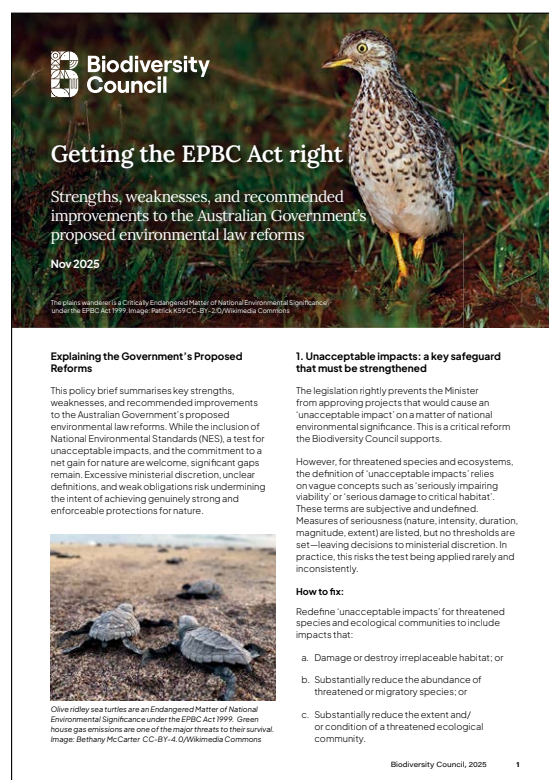
Ahead of the 2025 Federal election, we released *Safeguarding Nature: Priorities for the Next Australian Government*, with many recommendations adopted by the Australian Greens, including a commitment to lift nature spending to 1% of the federal budget. We assessed party and independent policies through a national scorecard, promoted widely—including ABC News coverage—and used targeted Facebook ads viewed by 37,000 people. We also launched a Do-Gooder campaign mobilising 727 people to send 18,000 emails to candidates about the need for stronger nature laws. Noosa Council also asked local candidates to support our recommendation to strengthen national nature laws.



Biodiversity Council CEO James Trezise (middle) and Councillor Assoc. Prof Peter Burnett (right) giving evidence in the senate inquiry into the law reforms.

Federal EPBC Act reform

Over the past year, we kept attention on the EPBC Act reforms. We prepared detailed submissions and worked directly with cross-bench MPs and their advisors on the potential consequences for nature of the Albanese Government's proposals and the amendments that would be critical to nationally important environmental values. We helped inform community attitudes through news stories—from our polling showing strong public support for strong nature laws (Jan), to warnings about rushed industry carve-outs (Mar) and inadequate reforms (Oct–Nov). We were quoted in 198 media stories reaching 1.6 million people, and this reach was further enhanced through strong social media, videos and webinars. Our sustained advocacy was key to the introduction of a 'non-offsettable (protected) matters' category in the new EPBC Act, ensuring critical and irreplaceable habitats cannot be funnelled into the federal offsets fund.



South Australia's Biodiversity Bill

Our submission led to important amendments safeguarding the primacy of the Act, ensuring that biodiversity approvals cannot be bypassed under other legislation. Several of our proposals to strengthen First Nations cultural heritage and self-determination were adopted, including explicit recognition of cultural heritage, supporting culture as a principle, Indigenous representation on the SA Biodiversity Council, and ensuring an independent Chair for the First Nations Expert Biodiversity Committee.

NSW Conservation Hunting Bill

In collaboration with other non-government groups, including the Invasive Species Council, Allanah and Madeleine Foundation, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and RSPCA, our submission, advocacy and targeted communication to NSW MPs contributed to the bill being rejected, preventing the elevation of recreational hunting as a conservation tool and protecting best-practice invasive species management.

Responsible cat ownership – many jurisdictions

Our cat management factsheet is now widely cited by media, councils and community groups. Over the past year, we generated 192 media stories on cat impacts and management reaching 1.9 million people. We gave evidence to a NSW parliamentary inquiry into the management of cats in NSW, contributed to the review of the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998. We opposed the importation of a new designer cat breed, collaborated with RSPCA SA, countered mis-information about cats on farms and undertook extensive media engagement.

We supported South Australia's statewide cat-strategy development through its reference group. The resulting draft strategy aligns strongly with our recommendations including the vision of cats not roaming and having no impact on wildlife, and commitments to educate the community about free-roaming cat impacts and how to transition pets to containment, to discourage feeding of unowned cats, require all pet cats to be bred by registered/licensed breeders, and to promote and support desexing by 4 month of age. It also includes a commitment to introduce statewide cat containment laws within 5 years, with programs to increase containment through education and incentives before that point, and to provide funding for Councils to support domestic cat management and compliance, and to secure investment in cat detention and management facilities.

The Biodiversity Council strongly supported existing regulations that make it illegal to release an unowned cat, which community cat advocates were challenging; the continuance of this evidence-based regulation in South Australia is another positive outcome for both native wildlife and cat welfare.

The WA Government has also announced changes to enable council-mandated cat containment, and a growing number of local governments are adopting or pursuing containment policies.

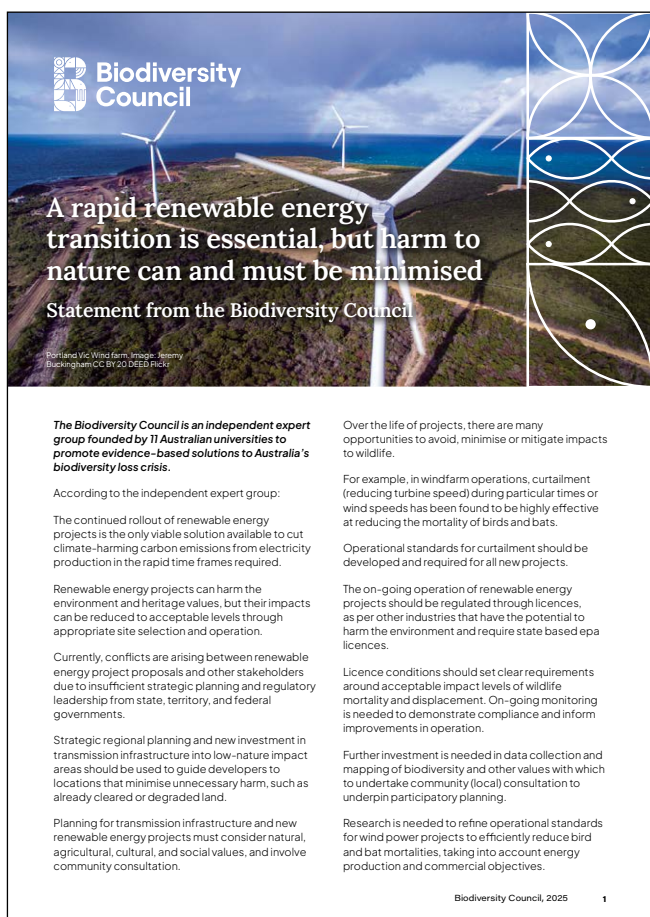


Biodiversity Council Science Communication Director Jaana Dielenberg giving evidence to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the management of cats in the state.



Championing a Rapid but Nature-Safe Renewable Energy Rollout

Climate and biodiversity goals must be pursued together; a rapid transition to renewable energy is essential for human survival, but it need not and must not come at the destruction of nature. We champion a nature-positive renewable energy rollout achieved through regional planning and policies that avoid and minimise environmental harm, so Australia can accelerate clean energy while safeguarding biodiversity and community values. We have been a prominent public voice on this in the media, a public statement and policy submissions.



The Biodiversity Council's statement on the renewable energy rollout (above) and submissions (below) have produced positive impacts for the environment.

Managing Biodiversity Impacts of Renewable Energy in Victoria

Through our policy submission, we secured improvements to the criteria used to assess risks to threatened birds and bats in renewable energy project proposals in Victoria. The government adopted our advice to expand the factors used to determine biodiversity risk to include proximity to key landscape features used by birds and bats in addition to protected areas. They also adopted our recommendations to address situations with high uncertainty or inadequate proponent-supplied information, and to delete the flawed risk matrix. These changes will result in more precautionary and evidence-based renewable energy planning.

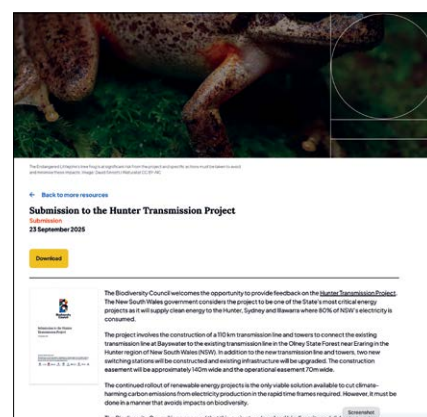
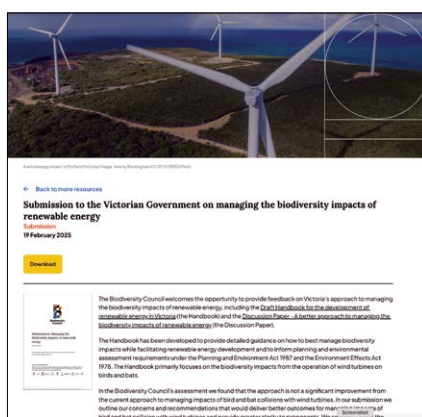
Opposing Redbank Biomass Power Station

Our expert evidence to the NSW Independent Planning Commission strongly influenced its decision not to approve the proposed biomass-burning project, which would have generated major emissions and accelerated land clearing through the use of native vegetation as fuel. We also called out the greenwashing and misinformation of the proponents, calling the project renewable energy.



Calling for realignment of the Hunter transmission line

Our submission on the Hunter transmission line's proposed route, its significant impacts on threatened species and ecosystems and the poor consideration of nature during the project planning has received media and community attention. We are still awaiting the NSW Government's response.



Improving on-ground action for our most threatened species

Finding safe havens for highly imperilled freshwater fishes

Our advocacy was instrumental in securing \$700,000 in federal funding to identify trout-free refuge sites where five highly imperilled captive-bred galaxiid fish species can be safely released to establish at least three new, more secure populations of each species. This is a critical step for the conservation of these species and represents the next conservation step following new captive-breeding efforts by the Victorian Government at Snobs Creek. This outcome aligns with a key recommendation in our factsheet, which was amplified with media coverage and other communications. As a result, captive-bred fish have already begun to be released in newly identified trout-free sites.



Fighting to secure Melbourne's dragon

The Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon—not seen for more than 50 years—has been rediscovered, but now faces an urgent and narrow window for survival. Working with species experts, we produced a report outlining the critical actions needed from the Victorian and Australian governments to secure the Critically Endangered species. We have been advocating directly to governments and through the media for rapid emergency intervention to safeguard its only known wild population, protect the last vestiges of its Critically Endangered grassland ecosystem, and address major failings in the strategic assessment and offset system that have enabled ongoing environmental loss. Australia rarely gets a second chance at saving a species—making this moment pivotal for the dragon's future.



The screenshot shows a media release from the Australian Government. At the top is the Australian coat of arms. Below it are the names of the ministers: Chris Bowen, Murray Watt, Josh Wilson, and an Archive link. The main heading is "Emergency action to save native fish at risk of extinction". The date is "22 February 2025". The text states: "The Albanese Labor Government is investing \$700,000 to save five species of galaxias fish". It continues: "Urgent action is needed to protect these small native fish from the threat of introduced trout." It lists the species: "Shaw, Tapered, West Gippsland, McDowell's and Yalmy galaxias grow to less than 10 cm long". It concludes: "The project will identify at least three sites for each species where introduced trout are not present in waterfalls."

Above) An excerpt from the media release by the federal Environment Minister announcing the new investment which aligns directly with the recommendations of the Biodiversity Council's factsheet on preventing extinctions in freshwater fish species.

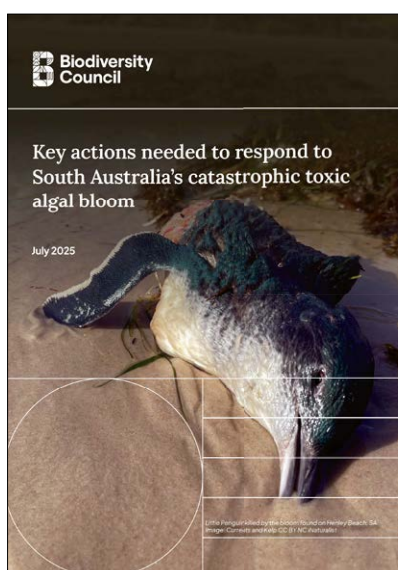
(Left) Shaw galaxias is one of the fish species that is at risk of extinction that will greatly benefit from the new investment. Image: Tarmo Raadik.



The image shows the cover of a Biodiversity Council factsheet. The title is "Delivering houses and saving dragons". The subtitle is "Overcoming government policy and implementation failures to ensure the survival of the Victorian grassland earless dragon". The date is "June 2025". The main image is a close-up of a Victorian grassland earless dragon on a mossy log. A circular inset shows a close-up of the dragon's head. The Biodiversity Council logo is in the top left corner.

Shaping Australia's Response to the South Australian Algal Bloom Crisis

In July, the Biodiversity Council rapidly mobilised experts from seven universities to prepare the first comprehensive report of key causes and responses to the harmful algal bloom. We informed community understanding through 1,031 media stories reaching 6.7 million people. Our advice informed state and federal actions, including emergency protection for the giant Australian cuttlefish aggregation, accelerated species assessments and new monitoring and ecosystem restoration funding. We prepared a detailed Senate inquiry submission and gave evidence at a hearing; the final Senate committee report cited us 35 times and adopted four key recommendations, including calls for a national framework for climate-driven ecological events, sustained funding for algal bloom monitoring, large-scale marine ecosystem restoration, and community mental health resilience support.



The Senate

Environment and Communications References Committee

Algal blooms in South Australia

5.129 The Biodiversity Council considered that the scale of financial assistance offered to date was modest compared to the funding provided for other environmental disasters, such as the prevention of future fish kills in the Murray-Darling Basin, and investment in wildlife and habitat recovery following the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires. It noted that while grants provided some immediate relief, they were unlikely to ensure long-term viability for most operators:

4.114 The Biodiversity Council also called for a large investment akin to the RIMReP model, and to immediately begin research to understand the impact of the bloom on biodiversity and species population, including a minimum of \$10m to undertake research, identify species in need of emergency intervention, and monitor the recovery of species and ecosystems.¹³⁵

Threatened or endangered species

4.22 The SA coast is home to many threatened or endangered marine species, which have been impacted negatively by the algal bloom. For example, the endangered Australian sea lion and vulnerable white shark have been impacted by the HAB, as well as threatened ecological communities such as the endangered giant kelp community. The Biodiversity Council highlighted that it is possible that some species may now qualify as threatened due to the effects of the HAB.²²

3.112 The Biodiversity Council's submission similarly highlighted areas where greater investment would be needed:

ABC NEWS

Scientists release seven-point plan to tackle SA's 'catastrophic' toxic algal bloom

By Camron Slessor Oceans

Thu 24 Jul



Shorthead seahorses found washed up at Hallett Cove during South Australia's devastating algal bloom. (Supplied: Jo Dunn / Naturalist)

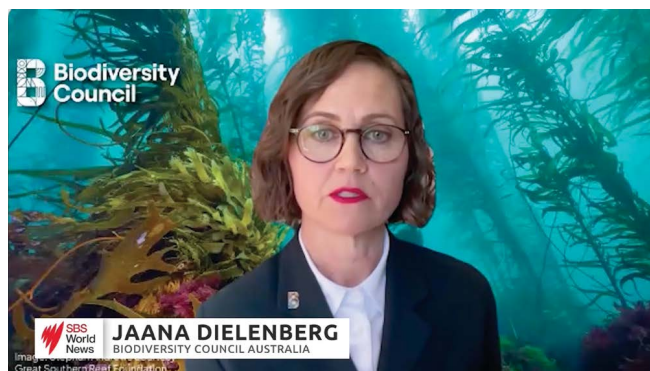
In short:

The Biodiversity Council has outlined seven key actions that should be considered to respond to SA's toxic algal bloom.

There was extensive reporting on TV, radio and online of our recommendations regarding the South Australian harmful algal bloom. (Above) One of the ABC online stories.



(Above) Council member Professor Gretta Pecl from The University of Tasmania on a Channel 7 special panel with Premier Peter Malinauskas. (Below) Biodiversity Council Senior Communication Director Jaana Dielenberg on SBS.



(Left) Our evidence and submission were cited 35 times in the Senate Inquiry report into the bloom and responses.

Preventing marine extinctions

Australian Governments have committed to preventing extinctions and recovering threatened species, but the costs for marine species have not been estimated until now. Research from the University of Melbourne for the Biodiversity Council and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, released in March, indicates that an annual investment of \$340 million is needed to save 95 threatened marine species, including dolphins, sea lions, sea turtles, whale sharks, handfishes, and various seabirds. This amounts to just \$12 per Australian each year. Providing evidence to support government investment is crucial for securing adequate funding for nature care. The research also complements work to estimate the funding required to prevent extinctions of non-marine species.



Media coverage of the findings of the research report (above) included a feature in *The Australian* (left).

Business Practices and Accountability

Nature Pledge for Urban Developers

Urban development is essential for meeting housing needs, but it can contribute to the steady loss of nature in cities. Biodiversity in urban areas is vital for climate resilience, human health and wellbeing, child development, and the survival of native plants and animals. To help shift development toward nature-positive outcomes, the Biodiversity Council completed the scoping and foundation of a Nature Pledge for Urban Developers in 2025. The Pledge provides a clear framework for developers to account for their biodiversity impacts and integrate nature from the earliest design stages—avoiding remnant vegetation clearing, restoring habitat, and enhancing ecosystems through green infrastructure and biodiversity-sensitive urban design. The first five developers have now signed on, publicly committing to these principles. Growing this initiative is a priority for 2026.

Assessing the nature impacts of the ASX200

With support from Australian Ethical, the Biodiversity Council is progressing Australia's first Nature Impact Assessment of the ASX200, analysing the nature-related impacts of the nation's largest companies across sectors to reveal which industries exert the greatest pressures on ecosystems and to provide a transparent, evidence-based benchmark for investors, regulators and businesses. This work will strengthen corporate accountability and equip investors with clearer guidance on nature-related risks and impacts.

Forest Stewardship Council – Native Forest Logging

At times, we bring our expertise to provide clear advice on responsible practices for specific industries through submissions. Supporting community concerns, we advised the Forest Stewardship Council that native forests should not be cleared and replaced with pine plantations under FSC certification. While FSC has not yet released its final interpretation, HVP has now announced it will regenerate logged sites back to native forest—a point previously in contention—demonstrating significant influence from our evidence-based guidance.

Organisational Growth and priorities

Organisational Growth and Strategic Developments

2025 marked a major organisational milestone: the Biodiversity Council completed its transition from incubation at the University of Melbourne to becoming an independent national charity with an independent board and CEO.

This transition strengthens our autonomy, organisational resilience, and ability to attract philanthropic support. As an independent charity, the Council can also expand strategic partnerships, develop new programs, and respond more rapidly to emerging issues.

Building National Capacity

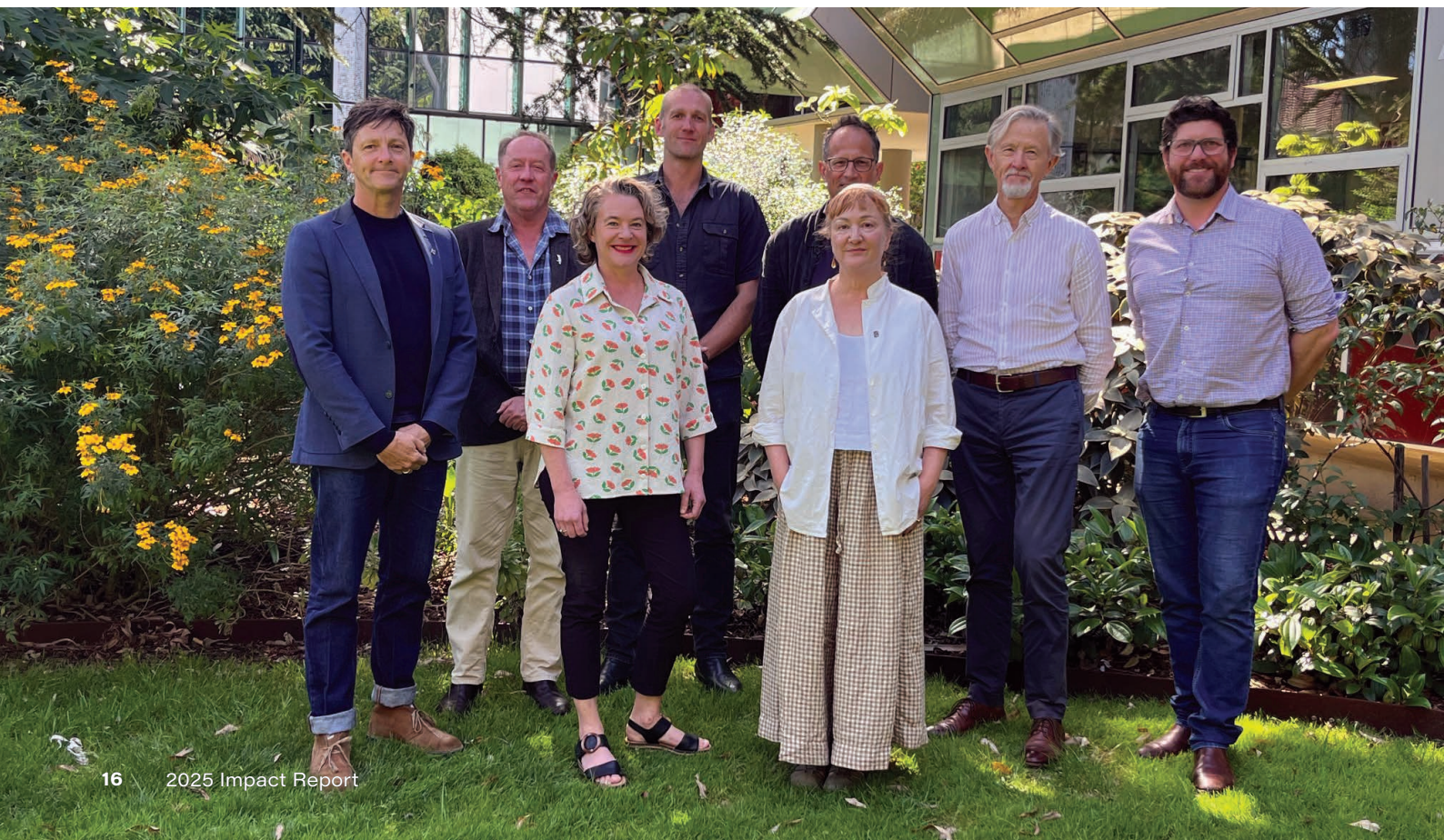
Developing communication and policy skills among biodiversity experts will increase the number of strong, visible, and informed voices advocating for nature. We continued our work to upskill current and emerging experts in media and policy, and provided tailored on-campus training at Deakin University, The University of Queensland, and The University of Western Australia, and a guest lecture for Master of Environment students at The University of Melbourne. The Nature Media Centre now augments this work with training programs tailored to community advocates and other nature champions.

Early career leaders program

We completed the pilot Early Career Leaders Program, with 15 early-career researchers now equipped with skills, confidence, and connections to be effective science communicators and policy contributors through training, mentoring and practical opportunities. Feedback indicated the program was “game-changing” for many participants who reported significantly increased confidence in engaging with media and policymakers. The success of the pilot program highlights strong demand to continue and expand this work.

A standout example is Jules Farquhar (Monash University), whose training enabled him to pitch and secure multiple feature stories in ABC and Australian Geographic, raising national awareness of highly imperilled reptile species. These stories not only benefit Jules’s career but also amplify evidence about species that urgently require conservation attention.

*Our founding board members (left to right)
Prof Brendan Wintle, Professor Hugh Possingham,
Prof Sarah Bekessy, Dr Jack Pascoe, David Robb,
Louise Arkles, Phillip Cornwell and CEO James Trezise.*



Strategic Priorities for 2026–2028

Looking ahead, our strategy focuses on deepening public understanding, influencing government and business decisions, empowering Indigenous leadership, and mobilising Australians to value and act for nature. Key priorities include:

Fighting to prevent extinctions

More than 2,000 Australian species are recognised as at risk of extinction, with many more likely to also be in jeopardy. Preventing extinctions requires urgent, targeted action. We will articulate and raise the profile of what's needed, especially for less-known species and groups not yet in the public eye.

Growing public understanding and countering misinformation

We will intensify efforts to explain biodiversity loss and its consequences, making biodiversity a mainstream issue linked to health, climate resilience and cost of living. We will also motivate people to take personal actions for nature.

Expanding youth engagement

We will continue building curriculum-aligned content and partner with youth influencers to reach students and young adults.

Strengthening Indigenous-led models

We will support initiatives such as SAALSMA and the Commissioner for Country proposal and amplify Indigenous-led research and knowledge systems.

Improving laws, policies and budgets for nature

We will push for the removal of harmful subsidies, improved environmental budgets, stronger national and state biodiversity laws, and nature-positive renewable energy planning.

Growing business accountability

Supporting leaders, calling out laggards to shift business practices, improve accountability, shape nature markets, and highlight economic pathways that support biodiversity rather than harm it.

Acknowledgements

We thank our outgoing Advisory Board members John Thwaites AM, Prof Bradley Moggridge, Cullen Gunn and Jenny Gray for playing a crucial role in our early success.

We also thank our generous donors The Ian Potter Foundation, The Ross Trust, Trawalla Foundation, The Rendere Trust, Isaacson Davis Foundation, Coniston Charitable Trust, Angela Whitbread, Nature Impact Collective, Australian Ethical Foundation, Wedgetail, James N. Kirby Foundation and Besen Family Foundation.

We also thank the University of Melbourne for hosting us prior to our independence and our other partner universities, Indigenous knowledge holders, early career researchers, volunteers, and the Australian community. Every achievement outlined in this report reflects collective dedication, expertise, and a shared commitment to embedding nature at the heart of Australia's decisions.

Together, we are building the foundations for a future in which biodiversity is valued, protected,

and recovering—where evidence guides decisions, communities are empowered, and the web of life that sustains us is safeguarded for generations to come.



Biodiversity Council staff and Lead Councillors left to right: Erin Farley, Liam Ferguson, Lis Ashby, Prof Sarah Bekessy, Prof Brendan Wintle, James Trezise and Jaana Dielenberg. Absent: Tracey Ferrier, Candice Bartlett.



Biodiversity Council

The Biodiversity Council brings together leading experts including Indigenous Knowledge holders to promote evidence-based solutions to Australia's biodiversity crisis. It was founded by 11 universities: The University of Melbourne, The University of Western Australia, The Australian National University, The University of Adelaide, The University of Sydney, The University of Queensland, Deakin University, The University of Canberra, Monash University, Macquarie University, and The University of New South Wales. It is host by The University of Melbourne. It receives support from The Ian Potter Foundation, The Ross Trust, Trawalla Foundation, The Rendere Trust, Isaacson Davis Foundation, Coniston Charitable Trust, Angela Whitbread, Nature Impact Collective, Australian Ethical Foundation, Wedgetail, James N. Kirby Foundation and Besen Family Foundation.

Australians love nature. Snorkellers on the Great Barrier Reef.
Image: Jaana Dielenberg

