

# 2024 Impact Report

Perth's remnant bushland patches provide a myriad of benefits to park users and surrounding areas

## 2024 by the numbers

- **39 councillors** who are experts in science, Indigenous knowledge, law, policy, economics and behaviour change
- **16+ million people** reached through media and social media action
- **2,400+ media articles** generated by the Biodiversity Council with an advertising equivalent value of \$8.2 million
- **25 formal policy submissions**
- **4 parliamentary inquiry appearances**
- **9 evidence-based reports** and factsheets presenting solutions to biodiversity loss
- **140,000+ emails** sharing the latest biodiversity science and policy news
- **15 early career researchers** receiving mentoring and cultural, policy and media training
- **100+ biodiversity researchers and practitioners trained** in raising the profile of their work with the media and policy-makers.

Results for past 12 months

## Director's message

I'm excited to share with you a snapshot of some of the incredible impacts we have achieved in 2024.

In the Biodiversity Council's second year we have continued to cement our position as a trusted and influential voice for nature across Australia.

This year the Biodiversity Council team has been exceptionally active, from elevating the incredible work of some of Australia's best scientists, First Nations knowledge holders and emerging scientific leaders in the media through to working behind the scenes and lobbying decision-makers in federal and state parliaments. We released our second Biodiversity Concerns survey and also conducted the first ever baseline assessment of federal subsidies that are potentially harmful to biodiversity.

In a year where we have seen seismic political shifts abroad and the spread of misinformation online, there has never been a greater need for trusted sources of information for the public and media to turn to.

We are so grateful to our supporters and partners in helping us grow public awareness of the nature crisis and champion evidence-based solutions in the halls of power.

With a federal election around the corner, we know there is a lot of work to do if we are to elevate the protection of nature and Country in the minds of decision-makers.

We are up for the challenge, with hope, optimism and determination.

Yours for nature,  
James Trezise



# A national disaster, here and now

## We need biodiversity – the web of plants and animals in nature

**Without regular exposure to nature** the cognitive development of children suffers, as does our physical and mental health, making us more likely to end up in hospital. A recent study found that visits to national parks by Adelaide residents **save the health system** \$140 million per year in avoided health costs – 50 times more than the cost of operating the parks.

Nature remains our **only viable method to eliminate greenhouse gases** on a large scale and our most effective way to mitigate climate change impacts.

**Without nature in our urban areas** they are much hotter, our air is less healthy, power bills go up and floods can be exacerbated. Across cities, less tree cover and poorer access to nature parks **increase disadvantage** for lower socioeconomic areas.

**Our agricultural sector** is dependent on insects, birds and mammals to pollinate crops, control many pests, and enhance the retention and health of soils.

**Half of our economy** is moderately to heavily dependent on nature. For example, **billions of dollars in tourism revenue** is dependent on our spectacular ecosystems, from the Great Barrier Reef to tall wet forests, tropical savannas and alpine herb fields.



Greater than 30% tree cover is associated with improved health for residents. When vegetation is biodiverse the benefits are higher. Image: Jaana Dielenberg

*Right: The Threatened Species Index highlights Australia's precipitous biodiversity decline. It shows the change in population sizes for threatened and near threatened birds, mammals and plants on average, compared to 2020 population sizes. It combines data from thousands of monitoring locations across Australia.*

## A nature loss catastrophe is underway

Australian biodiversity is in a more perilous position than ever before.

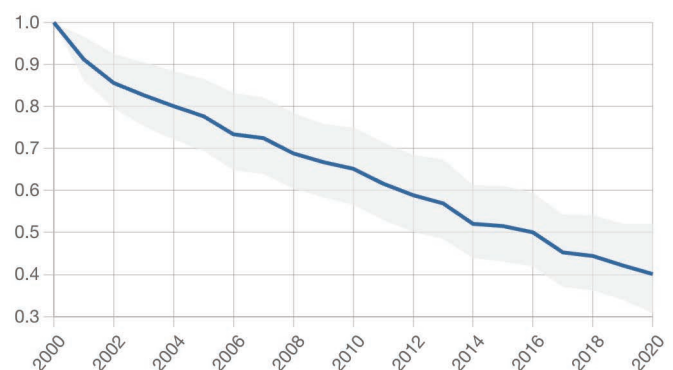
- Population sizes of threatened plants and animals are falling rapidly. On average, they are now only 40% of their 2020 sizes.
- 100+ species and subspecies are formally recognised as extinct.
- 2000+ species are formally recognised as threatened with extinction. Thousands more are likely to meet criteria but are not yet assessed.
- 19 ecosystems are showing signs of collapse.

While the current trajectory is bleak, decline is not inevitable, as we've seen with the recovery of Australia's humpback whale populations and the restoration of wildlife on Macquarie Island.

In most cases, **we already know** what is needed to turn things around with evidence-based solutions, but it isn't happening. Current environmental laws and policies are allowing ongoing loss:

- 7.7 million hectares of protected habitat cleared since the enactment of the EPBC Act (1999).
- 99% of development submissions that threatened protected habitat are approved.
- Only 5% of threatened species have been prioritised for attention by the federal government.
- Less than \$1 in every \$1000 in the federal budget goes to on-ground conservation actions.
- Dozens of species are more likely than not to be extinct by 2040 under current management.

**Australia's Threatened Species Index**



# How we are driving impact

The scale of transformational change requires bold solutions and experts willingly speaking out and motivating the community and decision-makers to act. **This is why the Biodiversity Council exists.**

Our Biodiversity Concerns Survey reveals that almost all Australians care deeply about nature, but they think nature is in good condition and do not realise there is a biodiversity crisis. We are driving change by addressing this gap in public understanding and concern, and **building demand for evidence-based solutions.**

***Our mission is to be a trusted expert voice communicating accurate information on Australia's most pressing biodiversity issues to the community, businesses and governments to motivate effective evidence-based action to ensure biodiversity and Country prosper.***

Our strategy is to drive change through the four pillars below. This report provides a snapshot of our 2024 impact in these key areas.

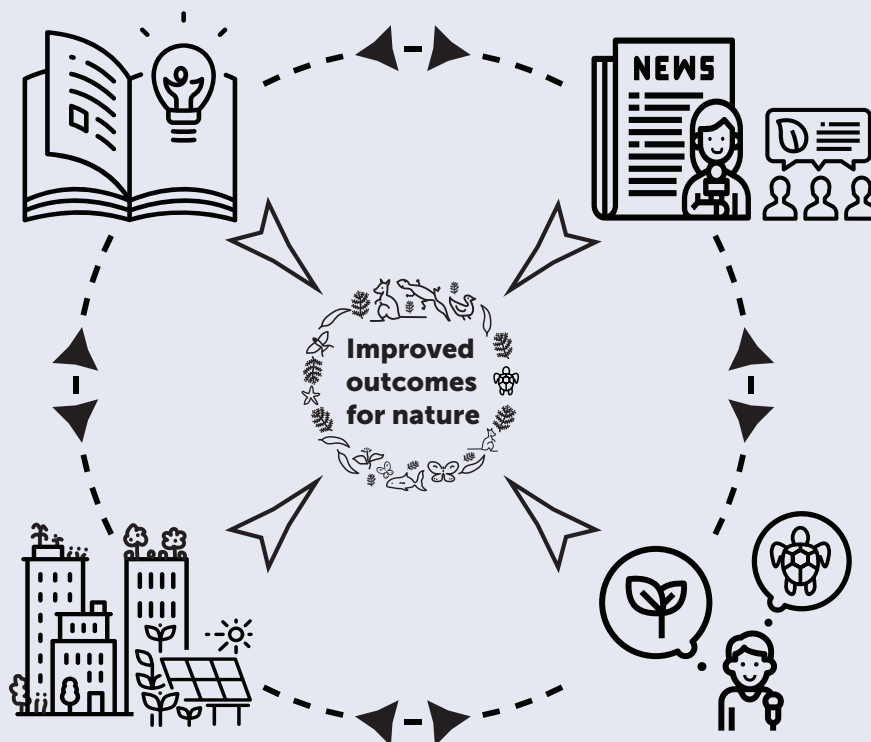
**With the support from our generous donors and partners, we are driving change through four pillars:**

## Providing thought leadership

We harness the world-leading expertise of our councillors to develop and promote solutions to the extinction crisis to the community, governments, and business and conservation sectors.

## Elevating biodiversity in public discourse

We create widespread media and social media attention to biodiversity issues and foster demand for change and support for solutions. We also engage the community through public speaking.



## Driving business to better account for nature

We engage business leaders to account for, and tackle, their footprints on nature, so that business can genuinely deliver nature positive outcomes.

## Creating biodiversity champions

We empower and equip new champions to confidently speak up for nature by providing media and policy training, and by providing evidence and resources they can use in their advocacy.



**Professor Hugh Possingham, The University of Queensland. Co-Chief Councillor**

“Humanity faces two crises that threaten our persistence – climate change and biodiversity loss. After three decades of campaigning, most Australians get climate change, but after 100 years of scientists raising concerns about extinctions, few Australians realise the significance of biodiversity loss.

“The Biodiversity Council is long overdue – even though our outreach impact per dollar has been huge. We have a lot of ground to catch up before we see the cultural transformation required. The Biodiversity Council model is cost-effective because it leverages the expertise of hundreds of scientists around Australia.”



**Dr Jack Pascoe, The University of Melbourne, Yuin man and Co-Chief Councillor**

“The Biodiversity Council has quickly become a strong advocate for the rights of Indigenous Australians as stewards for Country. Through the leadership of the Council’s Indigenous members, the organisation is in a unique position to blend Western science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to communicate the plight of, and solutions for, biodiversity.”



**Professor Carolyn Hogg, The University of Sydney, Councillor**

“The Biodiversity Council brings together key scientists, Indigenous leaders, and policy-makers to try and shift the dial on biodiversity action and policy for Australia.

“Working with the Council this year permitted us to contribute to the EPBC Act reforms and changes to the NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme and provide valuable advice to postgraduate students and early career researchers on how to better promote their biodiversity research for increased impact.”

Biodiversity Councillor Professor Sarah Bekessy (far right) at Parliament House with Independent MPs Sophie Scamps, Kate Chaney, Kylea Tink, Zali Steggall in August 2024. Image: Jannette Cotterell.



# Pillar 1. Driving change by providing thought leadership

The Biodiversity Council provides thought leadership on solutions to the extinction crisis. Our councillors are some of the world's leading experts on biodiversity science and knowledge. We harness the breadth of our expertise to develop effective solutions and to positively engage with governments and business on long-term systemic change. We also provide leadership to the broader environmental sector with evidence-based materials and positions.

In 2024, with the recruitment of a highly experienced policy lead to support our councillors, we have greatly increased our work to address major environmental law and policy issues, and to develop outstanding guidance products. This has included the report '**What Does Nature Positive Mean for Business and Government?**', the first review of Australian Government **subsidies that are likely to harm nature**. We have been the driving force calling for strategic regional planning to facilitate the **renewables roll-out** while minimising harm to nature. We have also led the development of two initiatives that aim to **increase culturally informed Indigenous-led management of Country**.

See more examples of our thought leadership work below.

## Building ambition within government and Parliament for stronger national environmental laws and policies

In 2024 the Biodiversity Council has played an important role in providing evidence-based advice to federal and state governments and parliamentarians regarding the reform of environmental laws, policies and programs.

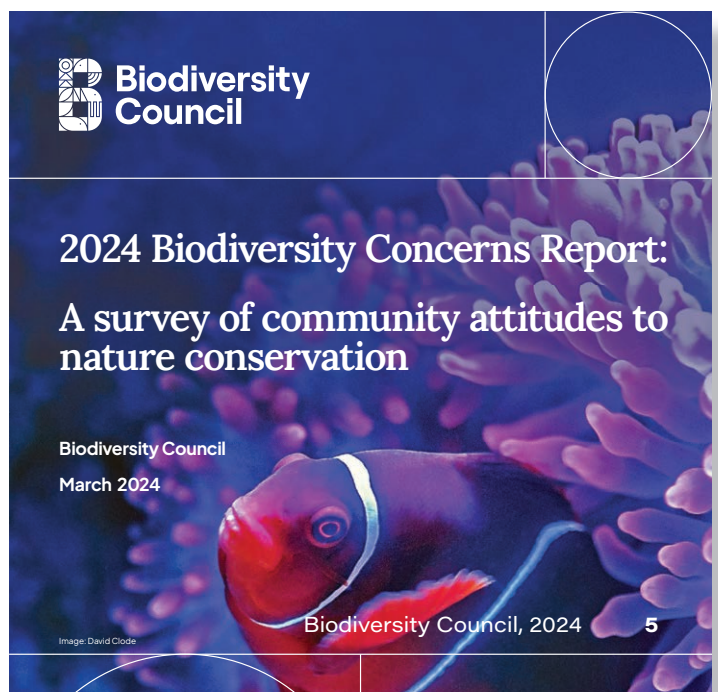
This included 25 formal policy submissions, five council members giving evidence at four parliamentary inquiries, factsheets, reports, direct briefings and other communications. We have been closely engaged in the federal government's closed-door consultations on their Nature Positive Bills. We also actively built support for the reforms with the broader community and key stakeholders.



Three Biodiversity Councillors gave evidence to a Senate Inquiry into the draft nature positive laws in July 2024, including Councillor Associate Professor Peter Burnett from the Australian National University College of Law



Biodiversity Council Director James Trezise discusses the 2024 federal budget on ABC News.



## Identifying nature harmful subsidies

In October 2024, we released a landmark report 'Identifying and Assessing Subsidies Harmful to Biodiversity in Australia.' Eliminating these subsidies is a commitment the Australian Government made in 2022 as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) but until the Biodiversity Council's assessment there appeared to have been no progress or attention on this GBF target. The findings revealed that 4% of the federal budget goes to subsidising activities that are likely to harm biodiversity each year. This is around 50 times more than the Australian Government invests in nature conservation.

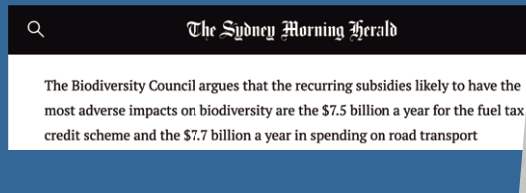
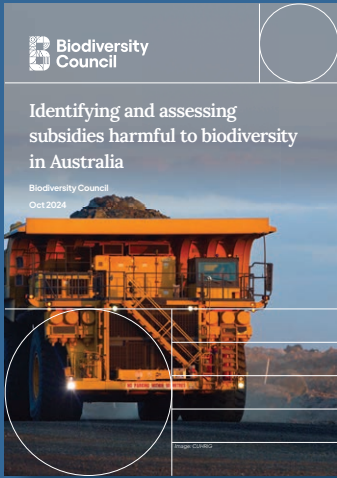
The findings have drawn considerable attention from all sides of politics and industry and will be important to achieving traction on this issue.

On the day the findings were released, independent MP for Mackellar Dr Sophie Scamps questioned Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek about the findings during parliamentary question time.



"My question is for the Minister for the Environment and Water. This week, Australia is hosting the world's first ever Global Nature Positive Summit, focusing on private investment in nature repair. Meanwhile, research from the Biodiversity Council shows the government continues to spend \$26 billion every year on harming biodiversity. How can we hope to be nature positive in this country when the government continues to invest in being nature negative? And shouldn't we first stop subsidising nature negative activities like native forest logging?"

– Dr Sophie Scamps, MP for Mackellar



## Minimising harm during the renewables roll-out



Professor Brendan Wintle, The University of Melbourne, Lead Councillor

"Renewable energy projects and infrastructure must roll out quickly if we're to hit Net Zero targets. But there is an urgent need for strategic planning so that the roll-out does not cause unacceptable harm to natural and culturally significant values. Some energy infrastructure projects are causing unacceptable harm and there are plans for more damage.

The Biodiversity Council has been central to the national discourse on the need for a nature positive energy transition, a transition that brings benefit, and not harm to nature and people. We've been making the case for increased government investment in strategic regional planning and infrastructure in the right places to avoid adverse impacts while also increasing certainty for renewable energy developers. It has led to high-profile media coverage and engagement with government agencies on the issue."

## Land value mapping vital before energy facilities roll out

Proponents of the solar farm have highlighted the location of the Meadow Creek property as ideal as it's close to transmission line infrastructure, but Prof Wintle warned against this type of cultural values.



## Fostering new Indigenous-led models of culturally informed biodiversity management

Effective inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise and perspectives is fundamental for effective biodiversity management in Australia.

Together with collaborators, the Biodiversity Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors have led the development of two significant proposals that aim to increase culturally informed Indigenous-led management of Country.

This includes a well-developed and -consulted proposal for a Commissioner for Country. The federal office would be an independent, authoritative Indigenous voice that guides the protection and management of natural and Indigenous cultural heritage values protected under national law.

The second is for the establishment of a Southern Australian Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Alliance (SAALSMA). This non-profit organisation will be dedicated to advocating for, facilitating, and brokering collaborations and knowledge exchange among southern Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders to advance southern Aboriginal environmental and economic priorities.



**Dr Teagan Shields, Curtin University, Arabana descendant, Lead Councillor**

“Empowering Indigenous-led decision-making is critical to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in biodiversity protection and management. Initiatives driven by the First Peoples councillors which are designed to unify the collective voice of First Peoples across the Country are essential in addressing the power and influence imbalance faced by First peoples sitting at decision-making points. The benefit of the Biodiversity Council supporting these proposals cannot be underestimated. We need to see more First Peoples proposals supported by environmental groups to realise positive outcome for Country.”



**Barry Hunter, CEO of North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance and Djabugay decendant, Councillor**

“The inclusion of First Nations voices in Biodiversity Council policy positions and messages has been valuable to influence perspectives and action on key issues affecting our vulnerable species that have strong cultural connection for First Nations people. The advocacy and key messages of the Biodiversity Council are critical to effective action for Australia's biodiversity and to support First Nations voices.”



# Pillar 2. Driving change by elevating biodiversity in public discourse

The Biodiversity Council drives change by attracting widespread attention to compelling biodiversity stories through the media and social media. We increase the impact of science by supporting our experts and broader network to create engaging scientifically and culturally accurate information on pressing biodiversity issues. Through strategic communication campaigns using media, social media, direct emails, tailored reports and factsheets, webinars and our website, we are achieving very high reach into the community and strong communication with policy-makers.

In 2024, we have continued to be highly successful in pitching stories to the media that would not have reached the community without the Biodiversity Council, such as the plight of 35 native fish at high risk of extinction that are not yet on the national threatened species list.

Over the past 12 months, we generated more than **2,400 stories** in the media, **reaching 14.6 million people**. This had an estimated advertising equivalent value of \$8.2 million. Our coverage included **3,800 minutes of radio** and **1,900 minutes of television**.

We have been the main driver of coverage on topics such as urban light pollution, minimising harm to nature in the renewable energy roll-out, and cat impacts and management. We have helped the community to understand the biodiversity issues of the day.

We have had coverage across all major media outlets including front page stories in *The Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, features on ABC's 7:30 and Channel 10's *The Project*, and extensive

coverage in regional newspapers and Indigenous and community radio stations. Almost one-quarter (23%) of our media stories were by ABC News.

Our **social media** posts have had **1.7 million views** and our **followers doubled to 15,000+**. Our website has had **80,000 webpage views** by **26,000 users**. **2,000+ people** attended our webinars.

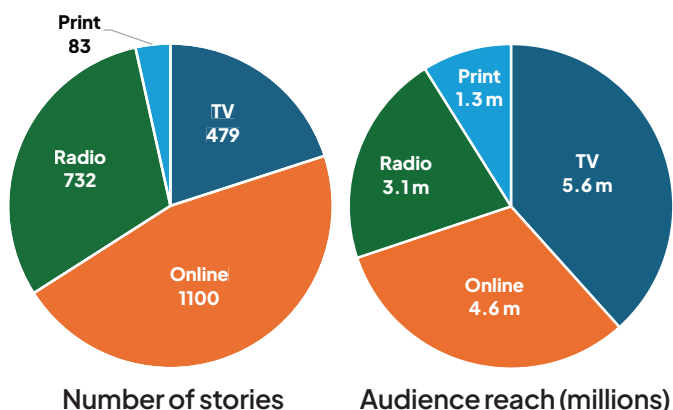
Our mailing list has almost doubled, reaching 7,000 people to whom we sent **140,000 emails** sharing the latest biodiversity science and policy news and Indigenous viewpoints.

We ran more than 20 campaigns presenting new research findings, unpacking important environmental policy issues and making a case for improved action for nature. You can see some examples in the following pages.

Some of our **outcomes** include:

- Successfully pushing the federal government to reverse its decision to shift approval powers for the offshore oil and gas industry to the Minister for Resources.
- In collaboration with NGO partners, securing a commitment of \$102 million from the federal government for preparation for the H5N1 bird flu.
- Focusing widespread attention on government subsidies that potentially harm nature (GBF Target 18), leading to Dr Sophie Scamps MP quoting our findings while challenging Minister for the Environment Tanya Plibersek about it in parliamentary question time.
- Greatly increasing understanding by the crossbench, other stakeholders and the community of important aspects of EPBC Act reform, including the governance of the proposed Environmental Protection Australia.
- Stimulating national discourse on how and why to minimise impacts to biodiversity and agriculture during the roll-out of renewable energy projects.
- Supporting and amplifying Indigenous wishes regarding dingo management.
- Our findings being frequently cited by local governments and other stakeholders when exploring changes to pet cat management.

## Total media coverage by type, past 12 months





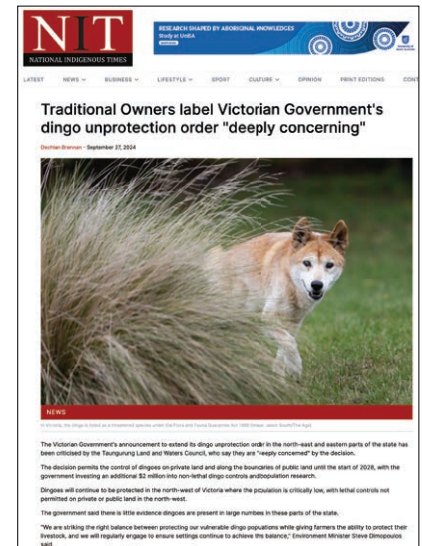
## Amplifying Indigenous voices in the management of culturally significant species and Country



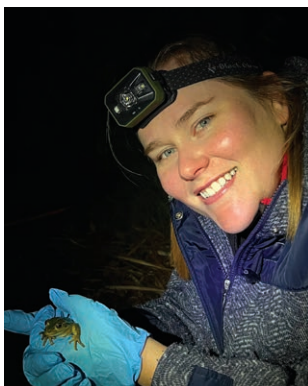
**Matthew Shanks, Executive Manager, Biocultural Landscapes, Taungurung Land and Waters Council, Nira Balluk man, Councillor**

“Now, more than ever, it’s important that we are having nuanced conversations in our communities about the impacts humans and human activities are having on the health of Country, both positive and negative. One such conversation is the vital role the Yirrangana (dingo) plays on Country to maintain balance biophysically, but also in those ancestral,

spiritual and social realms of Country. The Biodiversity Council has supported Taungurung and broader Traditional Owner voices to be amplified and ensure that balance is brought to conversations where it is desperately required.”



## Encouraging evidence-based, wildlife-friendly gardening

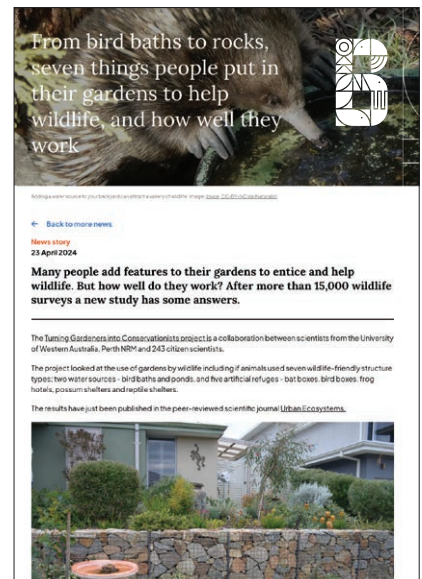


**Dr Bronte Van Helden, The University of Western Australia**

*Research focal area: Wildlife in urban areas and citizen science*

“The Biodiversity Council has been instrumental in enhancing the visibility and impact of our research. We appreciate their commitment to fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Having the Biodiversity Council showcase our research findings has been incredibly valuable in amplifying our research

to a broader, more relevant audience, including other researchers around Australia and the general community. Their support has helped connect our work to residents interested in adopting wildlife-friendly gardening practices who might not have otherwise come across it, and helped us to inspire biodiversity conservation within cities across Australia.”



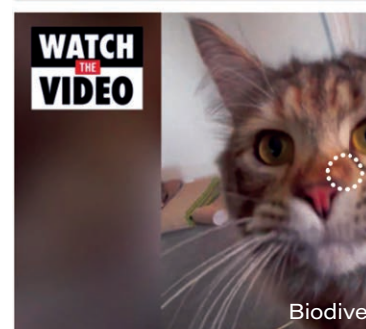
Our coverage on Channel 10's *The Project* included Australia's biodiversity crisis and National Threatened Species Day, cat impacts and management and extensive involvement in the Marsupial of the Year competition. Image: Rove McManus on Network Ten.



### Two-thirds of Australians support banning pet cats from roaming

A growing number of councils are forcing cat owners to keep — and most Aussies support the policy.

Jaana Dielenberg — The Conversation  
4 min read May 17, 2024 - 12:04AM news.com.au



In this article we combined findings from our community attitudes survey with research findings on cat impacts, welfare and policy options. It was widely republished by news outlets, reaching 100,000+ people and prompted over 1,000 minutes of radio coverage reaching an additional 420,000 people.

## Preventing extinctions

Australia's national threatened species list has more than 2,000 species but thousands more are also in trouble and would likely meet criteria for listing if assessed. When species are in trouble but not listed they miss out on basic legal protections and are highly unlikely to receive any conservation attention. Of the species that are federally listed, only 5% have been prioritised for action by the Australian Government.

The Biodiversity Council has been collaborating with scientists who are working on Australia's most imperilled species. We are playing a key role in supporting them to raise the profile of these species and to advocate for the actions needed to prevent extinctions, including much greater resourcing to address causes of decline.

We have particularly focused on less-charismatic species, like freshwater fishes that are in serious trouble and are not being championed by other organisations. In 2024, our communication campaigns on highly imperilled species generated 110 media stories with a total of 660,000 people reached, and high levels of awareness raised among key stakeholders in and out of governments.



**Dr Nick Whiterod, Goyder Institute for Water Research**

Research focal area: Freshwater fish conservation

“The expertise, extensive networks and established relationships of the Biodiversity Council were invaluable to maximise coverage of the alarming outcome of our study - that one-third of freshwater fish species in Australia are threatened with extinction. The support

included a factsheet with detailed policy and management recommendations which was distributed to key stakeholders, and a highly successful media and social media campaign. This strategic approach to promoting the study, targeted the general public, interested parties and state and national governmental managers and policy-makers, greatly assisting in highlighting the oft-neglected plight of freshwater fish, and will maximise the impact of our research.”



ABC News spoke to Professor Mark Lintermans from the University of Canberra about the findings of an assessment of extinction risks for 241 native freshwater fishes.



## Helping the community understand the biodiversity issues of the day

In a time when many government announcements have a political spin, and industry claims could have an element of greenwashing, the community needs a trusted independent voice to help them cut through misinformation and know what is really going on.

The diversity of our councillors, who are experts in science, Indigenous knowledge, law, policy, economics and behaviour change, allows us to quickly review, analyse and respond to events as they happen, commending and critiquing as appropriate in the media.

Our ability to connect journalists with the most appropriate leading experts and to provide fair, evidence-based perspectives has made us a go-to for many professionals across the media.

Take a look around this page for some of the topics we have covered.



**Media Release**  
**Adelaide Study finds visiting National Parks makes people healthier saving health system \$140M/year**  
 28 November 2024

New research adds to the pool of studies that show National Parks provide a total economic benefit worth 50 times more than the cost of running the parks and recommends new parks in low socio-economic areas.

[Read More](#)



**Media Release**  
**Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report shows that the reef is in serious trouble**  
 26 August 2024

The 2024 Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report has just been released by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). Here is what our experts had to say.

[Read More](#)



**Media Release**  
**Damning audit of NSW threatened species programs highlights that conservation can't run on crumbs**  
 19 August 2024

A government audit has just delivered a damning report on the NSW Government's programs to care for threatened species highlighting a massive gap in funding.

[Read More](#)

## The Sydney Morning Herald

# Reef damage hits national economy

**Mike Foley**  
 Climate correspondent

Ongoing damage to the health and beauty of the Great Barrier Reef by global warming is inevitable, delivering major blows to communities and the national economy, according to the Commonwealth health check of Australia's world-listed coral wonder.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority chairman Ian Poiner wrote in his agency's annual report that government Minister Tanya Pliberger's findings in his agency's outlook which says climate change is the reef's greatest threat due to the intensity and frequency of marine heatwaves causing coral bleaching.

"The overall future outlook for the Great Barrier Reef is 'very poor' [the lowest possible rating]

for hundreds of thousands of people, making a significant contribution to the state and national economies. It found that a healthy reef boosts the mental and physical health of people who interact with it and contrib-

Biodiversity Council member and University of Queensland coastal ecosystems expert Professor Catherine Lovelock said next to climate action, the best thing governments could do is invest in wetland protections and revegetate stream banks and gullies to reduce sediment runoff.

In 2016, according to an Australian study, Highest ocean heat in four centuries places Great Barrier Reef in danger, published this

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**Climate change and nature loss are our biggest environmental problems - so why isn't the market tackling them together?**  
 Published: January 16, 2024 11:47am AEST  
 Authors: Patrick O'Connor, Associate Professor, University of Adelaide

**Strong progress – from a low base: here's what's in NSW's biodiversity reforms**  
 Published: July 19, 2024 6:05am AEST  
 Authors: Wrostock Creators/Shutterstock

**The laws designed to protect the environment in New South Wales are completely ineffective, according to the scathing Henry Review in 2023.**  
 Authors: Hugh Possingham, Professor of Conservation Biology, The University of Queensland

**What will Australia's proposed Environment Information Agency do for nature?**  
 Published: June 6, 2024 4:09pm AEST  
 Authors: Nicolas Rakotopare, Author provided (no reuse)

**Last week, the Albanese government introduced legislation to create a new statutory body called Environment Information Australia. The bill is due for debate in parliament today. The**

**Biodiversity Council**  
 About Us Resources News Get Involved FAQ

**The four steps needed to align Australia's environmental laws and policies with a nature positive future.**

**News story**  
 25 October 2024  
**To be truly nature positive we need a net gain in biodiversity, not just to slow down the rate of nature loss.**

In a new article in *Science*, a joint UQ, Griffith and QUT team has identified four key steps that are needed to align Australia's national biodiversity conservation law with a nature positive future.

According to lead author and Biodiversity Council Early Career Leader Hannah Thomas, "Nature positive is important because many ecosystems have been so degraded that they no longer support the services that they contribute to people."

# Pillar 3: Driving business to better account for nature

The Biodiversity Council facilitates collaboration between biodiversity experts and engaged business leaders to account for, and tackle, their footprints on nature, so that business can genuinely deliver nature positive outcomes. And we hold business to account for their nature-related claims.

In 2024, we have begun directly collaborating with the **urban development sector** on new models of biodiversity-friendly development to foster Australia's first **Nature Pledge** for the urban development sector.

In addition, we are providing guidance to business and all levels of government about **Nature Positive** – what it

means and where to start. We have been addressing the vitally important but potentially confusing issue of **how to measure nature**, which is essential to avoid greenwashing and ensure 'nature positive' is what it says on the box.

And, finally, we addressed the very significant but under-appreciated issue of **light pollution impacts on wildlife**, which is becoming ever more pressing as new large-scale commercial light and sound shows are being increasingly proposed in spaces which are dedicated wildlife conservation areas. Our evidence was instrumental in the relocation of one show and provides a resource to guide wildlife considerations for future events.

## Working with the development sector to retain and value biodiversity in cities

More homes need to be squeezed into our cities – but that doesn't mean we have to lose nature; it is completely possible to have both. It is much better for us too and there are successful models around the world. Sadly, existing laws and policies are inadequate to halt the continued clearing and development of even Critically Endangered ecosystems, such as Melbourne's remaining Western Plains grasslands. We can't wait for governments to step in; to address the issue, we are working directly with the urban development sector, including developers, planners, consultants and financiers. Our work is not yet launched but we already have several signatories.



Sarah Bekessy talking with people about urban nature at WOMAD.



*Professor Sarah Bekessy, RMIT University, Lead Councillor*

“The Biodiversity Council has been incredibly supportive of our work in promoting biodiversity in cities and has been instrumental in creating opportunities to connect with industry, government and community. A large number of media and public-speaking opportunities have been generated by the Biodiversity Council to raise the profile of our work on biodiversity-sensitive urban design, preventing extinction in cities and regenerative city planning.

“Some highlights have been developing a Nature Pledge for the urban development sector, hundreds of people from the development and design industry attending a ‘nature insights for industry’ session, co-organising the Biodiversity and the Built Environment symposium at the Nature Positive Summit and public-speaking including WOMAD.”



## Supporting nature positive while minimising greenwashing

A team of international researchers, led by Biodiversity Councilor Professor Martine Maron, found that Nature Positive greenwashing is already taking place, with the potential to undermine existing biodiversity policies. This included the definition proposed by the federal government in the Environment Information Australia Bill 2024, which, according to the Law Council of Australia, 'watered down' the agreed international definition. Minter Ellison has stated that 'nature positive' claims carry significant legal and reputational risk for Australian companies.

The Biodiversity Council's report '**What Does Nature Positive Mean for Business and Governments**' plays an important role in reaffirming the international definition of nature positive and clarifying what actions need to be taken by federal, state and local governments, and businesses, to claim that they are meaningfully contributing to it.



## Minimising artificial light and sound impacts on wildlife – implications for commercial light shows



*Dr Loren Fardell,  
The University of Queensland*

"I was previously unsuccessful at connecting my research on urban wildlife-human dynamics with the public to facilitate on-ground wildlife conservation changes.

With the support of the Biodiversity Council, and by implementing the media and public science communications skills that they taught me, I was able

to finally bring widespread public attention to key issues through the media.

"Together, we influenced the relocation of a damaging light show away from an important wildlife habitat area and connected the community to better understand and consider the impacts of introduced lights on wildlife, including Christmas lights.

"The Biodiversity Council's approach to science and public communication is valuable to helping scientists maximise their real-world impact and vital to achieving an environmentally conscious and sustainable future."



# Pillar 4: Driving change by developing new biodiversity champions

The Biodiversity Council amplifies the voices of biodiversity champions and empowers and equips new champions to confidently speak up for nature. We provide media and policy training, development opportunities and support to early-career scientists and other potential biodiversity champions to maximise the impact of their work. We also produce evidence-based resources that are often cited by nature champions.

Our work to support and develop biodiversity champions over the past year has included the launch of our **Early Career Leaders (ECL) Development Program**. We also provided **media and policy training to more than 150 people** and identified and facilitated media opportunities for a range of people outside the council, including Indigenous collaborators. We hosted our first **intern**, have developed a pitch and are seeking funding for a collaboration with **school curriculum developers** and have just secured funding to set up a **youth engagement strategy**.

## Equipping conservation researchers and practitioners with media and policy skills

We provided face-to-face media training at five universities and for the Australian Network for Plant Conservation and the Wildlife Crime Research Hub. We also provided training in how to achieve policy impact through communicating, developing relationships and writing submissions. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with one participant saying they really wish they had had our training 20 years ago.

### *Jo Lynch, Business Manager, Australian Network for Plant Conservation*

“We are very grateful to Jaana Dielenberg and Professor Hugh Possingham from the Biodiversity Council for presenting a workshop at our recent conference on how to raise political and community awareness of threatened plants through the media and with policy-makers. The workshop was extremely useful to the plant conservation researchers and practitioners in attendance, to help them achieve a greater public profile and impact for their work. We also really appreciate the council complementing and amplifying our plant conservation work through effective advocacy with governments.”

## Early Career Leader Group

We kicked off our development program with an initial group of 15 early career researchers from partner universities. As well as being the leaders of tomorrow, these talented and capable younger people can be important leaders today.

The program focuses on developing policy impact, media, Indigenous collaboration and other communication skills – something that academia generally does poorly. It includes monthly training, mentoring and additional support and media and policy engagement opportunities.

Feedback has been incredibly positive, with participants more confident about how to have impact in future. Many are already applying what they have learnt for greater policy and media impact. See the next page for examples.

Presenting media and policy training for Australian Network for Plant Conservation members





## Dr Chantelle Doyle, University of New South Wales

Research focal area: *Threatened plants*

“The ECR mentoring program has provided opportunities to meet other researchers and hear about their experiences and challenges. The monthly seminars have provided an opportunity to learn about applications of our research outside academia. Especially useful for me has been learning to navigate political influence, working with First Nations Australians and the session on self-care and identifying our personal drivers to help prioritise efforts and minimise decision fatigue. I am proud to have participated in the Early Career Leaders Development Program and am left feeling empowered that my skills, particularly in storytelling, have value and a place in the conservation of Australia’s extraordinary biodiversity, from both within and outside academia.”



## Jules Farquhar, Research Assistant, Monash University

Research focal area: *Threatened reptiles*

“The Biodiversity Council’s Early Career Leaders Development Program has been an extremely useful source of guidance and professional growth. The mentorship, training, and tailored advice provided practical tools that have significantly enhanced my ability to communicate my research effectively.

“In particular, the media training from Jaana Dielenberg was a game-changer, equipping me with the skills to engage with journalists and craft compelling narratives about my work. As a result, I successfully secured high-profile coverage of my research with the ABC, which increased the visibility and reach of my research, helping me connect with broader audiences. Beyond the immediate benefits, the program has given me tools and strategies to ensure my work continues to make a difference in the long term. I strongly feel that the program is an invaluable resource for early career researchers, and I hope to see it supporting other researchers in the future.”



## Hannah Thomas, PhD Candidate, The University of Queensland

Research focal area: *Land clearing policy*

“I’m so grateful to have been part of the Early Career Leaders Development Group throughout 2024. We’ve received training on a range of really useful topics, such as media, policy impact and Indigenous engagement. I’ve had the opportunity to meet other early career leaders from around Australia and to engage in an insightful mentorship program.

“Media coaching from Jaana was invaluable when I published my first research paper, on land clearing and environmental policy

in northern Australia. Despite having little prior media experience, I was able to communicate my research findings clearly and concisely across a range of channels, including radio, print and online. Jaana also guided me towards the most relevant media outlets to increase the impact and reach of my research. I now feel much more confident about engaging with the media in the future and communicating my research to a wide and diverse audience. We also worked together to develop a factsheet targeted to policy-makers.”





# These impacts are made possible by our donors and partners

To our generous donors, partners and collaborators, thank you. Your commitment to nature and biodiversity has enabled significant progress this year. We are honoured to work with dedicated organisations and individuals who share our vision for Australia's biodiversity to be recognised and valued as a priceless heritage, essential to our lives, a defining part of our country, and a legacy we strive to protect and restore for the future.

A special thank you to our founding donors, The Ian Potter Foundation, The Ross Trust, Trawalla Foundation, The Rendere Trust, Isaacson Davis Foundation, Coniston Charitable Trust and Angela Whitbread. We simply wouldn't be here without you. Together, we are fostering a future where biodiversity thrives.

We are excited to announce a new partnership with Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. With the foundation's support, we will co-design a youth engagement strategy for the Biodiversity Council. We cannot wait to share the plans and results with you next year.

Thank you as well to our 11 university partners and 39 councillors from around Australia. Your support and contributions have been an essential part of the Biodiversity Council's success and impact to date. We look forward to working with you to continue to elevate expertise, science and Traditional Knowledge in the national discussion on protecting and restoring Australia's biodiversity.

Australia's Great Barrier Reef is in a parlous state, with repeated major coral bleaching events occurring due to marine heatwaves. Image: Clownfish by David Clode/Unsplash

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First Peoples expertise and perspectives are fundamental to the council and our work. Image: A Ranger on Anangu Country by Jaana Dielenberg

The Biodiversity Council 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.

