



Sellicks Woodlands and Wetlands Action Network (SWWAN)

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To the Biodiversity Coordination Unit
Re: Draft Biodiversity Bill

Dear Committee,

We write to make a few short comments regarding the draft Biodiversity Bill in addition to our answers in the survey.

Restoring biodiversity.

Biodiversity in SA is in a state of ongoing decline. The main driver for this is the lack of habitat due to the historical clearance of over 90% of the landscape. Unless there is a clear plan to for how to restore the amount of habitat to the globally accepted minimum standard of 30% good quality habitat in each landscape, the declines will continue, and this act is pointless. Simply protecting what's left guarantees the collapse of the environment, with half of all species predicted to go extinct by the end of the century.

The slogan 30% by 2030 is unrealistic given the scale of the restoration required. 150,000 ha of restoration are required to achieve 30% in the Mount Lofty Ranges alone, but 30% protected and restored by 2055 is achievable. It also takes decades for restoration to mature and become functioning ecosystems, so the sooner we have and implement a plan the better. This restoration goal must be front and centre in the Act's Objectives and Principles.

Planning.

The environment is our most essential infrastructure and must take priority over other planning such as housing. Restoring the environment to a functioning level where biodiversity declines are reversed and ecosystems self-sustaining must be the priority of this government to mitigate the threat posed by the collapse of ecosystem functions to our food security, agricultural industry, economy and society. Continuing to build greenfield housing developments and prioritising agricultural production over the need for biodiversity severely constrains our capability to restore the environment and reverse the ongoing declines.

If this bill does not include clear plans for broad scale environmental restoration to at least the minimum global standards and prioritise restoration of the environment over other land uses, this proposed Biodiversity Act would be better titled the Biodiversity Cat.

Sincerely,

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