

My Submission to South Australia's first Biodiversity Bill

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I am a passionate advocate for conservation, ecology and environment and I appreciate the arrival of consultation for South Australia's first Biodiversity Bill. Nature positive laws are essential for putting biodiversity front and centre in society as the foundation of life and planetary health.

Some aspects of the Bill are commendable, however I advocate for stronger protections than what is currently stated. The Bill must be explicit in how biodiversity is assessed. Importantly the Bill, to become the Act, needs to be given primacy over other legislation that impacts nature such as the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016 and the Mining Act 1971.

I back scientifically founded improvements and amendments to the Bill as vital. I therefore support a call to guarantee political decisions will be made that prevent further decline of nature and bring about large scale restoration of degraded natural environments and their biodiversity. The Bill must have safeguard mechanisms to prevent inappropriate, environmentally harmful development. Such development requires refusal at the outset.

Offsets, being a flawed and inadequate way to compensate for biodiversity loss and damage , must have legal limits established.

The Bill must make the presiding Minister responsible for key decisions for the listing of threatened species and the critical habitat they depend on. This is too important to be left as a discretionary item.

Neither should too much power be invested in the Minister. Peak organisations representing nature need to be nominative bodies for the Biodiversity Council, rather than Ministerial appointments. I back the Biodiversity Council being in charge of developing policy for offsets.

The Bill needs to address joint proclamation of national parks in the state. Mining leases should not persist in impinging on dedicated areas for conservation

Funding for the bill must be a commitment for implementation, especially for ecological restoration work. This requires the establishment of an independent statutory conservation trust with the Bill setting out its provisions.

I recommend an invasive species council be added to the list of committees for governance and administration of the Act given the high number of extinctions of invertebrates, frogs, reptiles, birds, mammals and plants since 1788. Extinctions of native flora and fauna due to among other things, invasive species, are ongoing and rising faster than at any time in history before our age of the Anthropocene.

In summary, I advocate for a stronger, robust, comprehensive Biodiversity Act that supports collaboration between government and NGOs. An Act that declares a legal standing for life and nature as paramount. An Act so nature and people can thrive and prosper together.

Today's children and upcoming generations deserve and will be thankful for an Act that ensures sustainable environmental practises, that ensures biodiversity mitigations against the worst impacts of climate change, that provides for human wellbeing through rich ecosystem services.

In 2022 the Australian government committed to protect 30% of Australia's land and oceans by 2030.(The Nature Conservancy) Let's make it happen.

I commend my submission for your consideration.