

Biodiversity and climate change

Climate change affects Australia's unique environment and native species. The time to protect our native species is now.

AUSTRALIA'S unique environment is under pressure. Threats such as land clearing, salinity and invasive species are making our natural assets vulnerable. Climate change exacerbates existing threats, such as increasing frequency of fires and contributing to more persistent droughts.

The gradual rise in temperatures may eventually go beyond the tolerance of some species.

There is now reasonable scientific evidence to suggest climate change may affect our native species and their habitats.

There is still much uncertainty about how individual species and the landscape will respond to future climate change. It is vital that we have the right information to ensure Australia makes sound decisions in this area.

Australia is one of the first countries in the world to develop a comprehensive plan to address potential impacts of climate change on our environment.

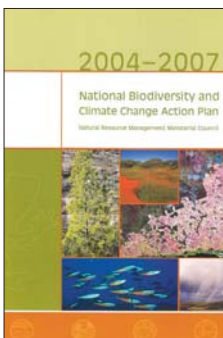
The National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan (the Plan), developed by the Governments' Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, was finalised last September. It is the first step in the long-term challenge to help our native plants and animals adapt to future climate change.

The Plan includes steps to improve our understanding of how climate change impacts on our natural resources. It will help us identify and protect vulnerable species living on land and in freshwater and marine environments.

It promotes actions such as revegetation around forest patches to make



The Mountain Pygmy-possum of the Australian Alps is considered to be one of our most vulnerable species under climate change as it lives on mountain-tops and has adapted to a cold climate. If the climate becomes hotter, the Mountain Pygmy-possum will have nowhere to go. Photograph by Linda Broom.



plant life more resilient to rising temperatures. It includes activities aimed at preventing establishment of invasive species and reducing the chance of existing

weeds, feral animals and plant and animal diseases from spreading further in future climates.

Putting the Plan into practice may require a change in the way we manage our natural resources. We need to use the best available science to determine which actions will work and how best to apply them.

We also need to weigh up the economic costs and benefits of taking certain actions.

The Plan provides valuable information, including steps to undertake case studies across a range of natural environments.

Most of all, the community needs to have access to the most accurate information on this important issue.

The Plan contains actions to integrate information about climate-change impacts on biodiversity into existing educational material and school programs so that future gener-

ations of Australians can take up the fight to protect our precious natural resources.

Useful contacts

For a copy of the plan, see <www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/nbccap/index.html>.

For more information, inquire at the following addresses:

The Australian Government Dept of the Environment and Heritage, <ciu@deh.gov.au>;

NSW Dept of the Environment and Conservation, <info@epa.nsw.gov.au>;

Victorian Dept of Sustainability and Environment, <climate.change@dse.vic.gov.au>;

Queensland Environmental Protection Agency, <nqic@epa.qld.gov.au>;

Western Australian Dept of Conservation and Land Management, <info@calm.wa.gov.au>;

South Australian Dept of Environment and Heritage, <parkinfo@saugov.sa.gov.au>;

Tasmanian Dept of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, <NatureConservationInquiries@dpiwe.tas.gov.au>;

Northern Territory Dept of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment, <biodiversityconservation.dipe@nt.gov.au>;

ACT, <EnvironmentACT@act.gov.au>.