



LEADBEATER'S POSSUM ACTION PLAN

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST
THREATENED SPECIES
STRATEGY WAS
LAUNCHED ON
16 JULY 2015 AT
THE THREATENED
SPECIES SUMMIT.

The Strategy sets out the Australian Government's bold, new and action-based approach to protecting and recovering our threatened plants and animals. The Leadbeater's possum is identified in the Strategy as a species for emergency intervention.

At the Summit, the Minister for the Environment made a commitment to have an Action Plan for the species completed by 31 August 2015. He also requested the Threatened Species Commissioner meet and consult with all parties involved to discuss the details of an emergency intervention.

The Commissioner had productive meetings with the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and VicForests. He also convened a community roundtable with the Friends of Leadbeater's Possum, key scientists and non-government organisations to discuss the possum and the Action Plan.

The Commissioner and the Department of the Environment are committed to working closely with Victorian Government to protect the possum, which is endemic to Victoria and the state's faunal emblem.

ACTION

The Australian Government has committed more than \$2.5 million of funding towards the protection and recovery of the Leadbeater's possum since the appointment of the Threatened Species Commissioner in July 2014.

Now

- Three 20 Million Trees projects, worth more than \$1.8 million, are planting more than 790 000 trees to improve habitat for the Leadbeater's possum and support the release of captive bred possums
- More than \$700 000 has been committed through the National Environmental Science Programme (NESP) Threatened Species Recovery Hub for two projects to improve the science and understanding of the species

One month

- Revitalised recovery team begin work on new recovery plan, setting out actions to turn around decline of the species

Three months

- Commence GPS tracking study to determine patterns of habitat use, nocturnal behaviours and den tree use in young regrowth forest and older forest areas
- Commence project to improve habitat management and trial methods to create new understorey and increase tree hollow availability

One year

- New recovery plan completed and driving action to turn around decline of Leadbeater's possum



THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S LONG-TERM GOAL IS TO HALT THE DECLINE OF AUSTRALIA'S THREATENED PLANTS AND ANIMALS AND SUPPORT THEIR RECOVERY.

OUR VISION

Our goal for the Leadbeater's possum is to stop the decline and support the recovery of the species so that its chances of long-term survival in nature are maximised. We aim to do this by addressing the threats and by acting to support recovery, while at the same time ensuring that the development underpinning our economic and social wellbeing is sustainable.

Supporting the recovery of the Leadbeater's possum will rely on partnerships between federal and state governments, non-government organisations, the private sector, land managers, scientists and community groups. By working together and combining our efforts, we can protect the Leadbeater's possum into the future.

OUR APPROACH

Our approach is based on the principles of science, action and partnership, consistent with the Threatened Species Strategy. Recovery actions must consider conservation advice and recovery plans, and the impacts of threats such as invasive species, habitat loss, habitat alteration and fire. Addressing and implementing a range of other recovery actions such as developing safe havens and secure populations, captive breeding, habitat management and other innovative techniques will also support recovery.





OUR COMMITMENTS

The Australian Government has committed more than \$2.5 million towards the protection and recovery of the Leadbeater's possum.

SCIENCE

We will commit more than \$700 000 to two scientific studies through the NESP Threatened Species Recovery Hub.

One study will involve world-first GPS tracking to determine the patterns of habitat use, nocturnal behaviours and den tree use by individual Leadbeater's possums in young regrowth forest and older forest areas. This research will contribute to the new recovery plan and directly links to the objectives of both the Australian Government Recovery Plan and Victorian Government Action Statement and is supported by the Victorian Government.

The second project will trial methods to create new understory habitat and increase tree hollow availability for the possums to breed and take shelter in. This project will directly benefit the species by using adaptive management to improve on-ground action and recovery.

The details of these projects are currently being finalised and the findings of the projects will feed directly into management actions.

ACTION

Through the 20 Million Trees Programme, the Australian Government has contributed more than \$1.8 million towards the improvement of habitat for the Leadbeater's possum. We are now investing in two revegetation projects at Yellingbo National Park that have benefits for the possum and also support the critically endangered helmeted honeyeater.

In partnership with two 'Friends of' groups and Greening Australia, 1 000 volunteers will plant over 30 000 trees within one area and over 650 000 trees across 100 hectares in another area, providing more habitat for the species to thrive in.

The Australian Government is also contributing \$100 000 towards revegetating eight hectares of floodplain forest near Healesville Sanctuary. The project, led by Zoos Victoria, will provide 112 000 trees and support the release of captive bred Leadbeater's possums and helmeted honeyeaters. The offspring of these free-ranging populations will have enhanced behavioural fitness and survival skills and will be used to secure or establish other wild populations.

We will also be looking for opportunities to deploy Green Army teams and establish 20 Million Trees projects to support habitat restoration for the recovery of the Leadbeater's possum.



A REVISED RECOVERY PLAN WILL BE COMPLETED BY MID 2016. DRIVING ACTION TO TURN AROUND THE DECLINE OF THE LEADBEATER'S POSSUM.

PARTNERSHIP

The Australian Government will work collaboratively with the Victorian Government towards the protection and recovery of the possum. The first step in this process is to progress a new recovery plan for the Leadbeater's possum. We welcome the Victorian Government support towards working together on the new plan.

Based on the most up to date science, the plan will set out clear objectives and actions to turn around the decline of the species.

A new Recovery Team will lead the drafting of the plan. Chaired by the Threatened Species Commissioner, the team will include Professor John Woinarski, one of Australia's leading mammalogists, as well as representatives from the Victorian and Australian governments.

The recovery team will seek input from key stakeholders from the environment, science and forestry sectors, in developing the plan.

The group will follow best practice guidelines for recovery team governance, as outlined in the recovery practices target of the Threatened Species Strategy, and will report annually on progress. This group will meet to initiate work by 30 September 2015.

We acknowledge the Victorian Government's leadership in establishing an Industry Taskforce and commend their commitment to implement new measures announced in April 2015 to identify and protect Leadbeater's possum colonies and habitat to help secure its long-term survival.

IMAGE CREDITS

Page 1: Leadbeater's possum, Dan Harley

Page 2: Revegetation works, Department of the Environment

Page 3: Leadbeater's possum, Dan Harley

Page 3: Minister Hunt, the Threatened Species Commissioner, and a Healesville Sanctuary keeper, with a Leadbeater's possum, Department of the Environment.

Page 4: Leadbeater's possum, Dan Harley