

The Threatened Species Scientific Committee 10-point Bushfire Response Plan

The Committee is charged with providing the Minister with independent scientific advice to achieve biodiversity conservation outcomes, specifically for threatened species and ecological communities under national environment law.

The Committee will work with partners, experts and the wider community, to enable the statutory response to the 2019-20 bushfires to be timely and robust.

The following TSSC Bushfire Response Plan sets four key objectives, which align with those of the Expert Panel, and ten actions to deliver an efficient and effective response.

A. Prevent extinction and limit decline of native species and ecosystems affected by the 2019-20 fires

Many unlisted species and ecological communities urgently require statutory protection as a result of the 2019-20 fires, and many listed species and ecological communities need re-assessment because their conservation status has deteriorated.

1. Advise the Minister on species that may be eligible for listing and uplisting as quickly as possible:
 - a. Prioritise species and ecological communities for conservation status review, using the information on species and ecological community fire vulnerabilities, collated by the Wildlife and Threatened Species Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel.
2. Accelerate processes for assessment and re-assessment of these priority species:
 - a. Update listing assessments for fire-affected species and ecological communities already on the Finalised Priority Assessment List.
 - b. Defer assessments for other species on the Finalised Priority Assessment List that are not fire-affected, and where listing is unlikely to confer a conservation benefit (e.g. species being considered for listing as Extinct).
 - c. Fast-track threatened species list alignment for fire-affected species with the States and Territories through the Common Assessment Method.
 - d. Identify opportunities for collaboration with professionals with the capacity to efficiently create draft assessments to TSSC standards for subsequent review by the TSSC e.g., IUCN specialist groups, other specialist taxonomic groups and the States and Territories.
3. Support immediate post-fire recovery efforts by appending information on fire impacts and key actions to support recovery to the Conservation Advices and Recovery Plans of fire-affected species and ecological communities. Key actions (including cultural practices) will align with the priority activities identified by the Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel.
4. Respond to community interests about the impacts of the 2019-20 fires on biodiversity
 - a. Accept public nominations for assessment and re-assessment of species and ecological communities at any time and continue to consider them in Proposed Priority Assessment List processes unless clearly ineligible for listing.
 - b. Engage and consult with Indigenous communities and other stakeholders to improve fire management response in conservation and threat abatement planning.
 - c. Consider potential for listing/uplisting of species that are highly valued by the community (e.g. Koala) by undertaking preliminary evaluations immediately.

B. Reduce impacts from future fires

5. Update the Conservation Advices for the highest priority fire-affected species and ecological communities to include the impacts of, and management response to, the 2019-20 fires; the potential impacts and management of future fires and the information needs, key conservation actions and resources that will be needed to support longer-term recovery.
6. Complete the assessment of the '*fire regimes that cause biodiversity decline*' Key Threatening Process and develop guidance on recovery actions to build the resilience of biota to future fires.

C. Learning and continual improvement

7. Document the impact of the 2019-20 fires on statutory lists, as a high-level summary of the overall impacts of the 2019-20 fires on biodiversity.
8. Acknowledge the changed situation following the fires in the application of the listing criteria, review the adaptations adopted by the Committee and distil lessons for future response to biodiversity crisis events.

D. Communicate the TSSC's role and activities in response to the fires

9. Maintain close communication with the government response, including the Expert Panel, the Threatened Species Commissioner and the Minister for the Environment.
10. In partnership with the Minister's office and the Department, communicate to the broader conservation sector, Indigenous communities and general public, the TSSC's planned response to the impacts of the bushfire on biodiversity, including the focus on collaborative action, and provide updates on progress.