



EIANZ welcomes stage two of Government's Nature Positive Plan, urges timely reforms

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) commends the federal government on the announcement of the second stage of its Nature Positive Plan. We welcome further consultation on reforming the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) but urge the government to confirm a timeline for this most crucial stage of its reforms.

Establishing Australia's first national independent Environment Protection Agency is critical to ensuring new environment laws can be effectively administered. It is vital that this body be adequately resourced, including with the development of meaningful National Environmental Standards. EIANZ looks forward to participating in continued consultation on the development of these Standards, which were the cornerstone recommendation of the Samuel Review.

We hope that the EPA will integrate climate considerations into its work, in line with Australia's commitment to achieving net zero emissions. The work of the EPA would otherwise have the potential to compromise efforts to reduce emissions through the Safeguard Mechanism. This is just one example of a need for an integration framework that ensures all Government policies work in harmony to achieve Australia's stated environmental goals.

EIANZ also welcomes the additional \$100 million of funding to enable timely environmental approvals. However, we caution the government to be wary of sacrificing a robust process in favour of speed, which will only lead to further delays. A requirement for sign-off by appropriately certified professionals would assist in ensuring credibility in an expedited process while also providing safeguards as the environment profession rapidly expands.

Finally, we support the creation of Environment Information Australia (EIA), which provides a unique opportunity to create a comprehensive and accessible source of environmental data. However, the scope of the EIA as outlined in the policy papers released earlier this year appears limited.

The information and data to be overseen by the EIA seem to be solely focused on the condition of Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) without consideration of external impacts or pressures such as greenhouse gas emissions, excessive nutrient and effluent flows or meteorological changes over extended periods.

There is also work to be done on the scope of the EIA's data and the mechanics of how it will interact with the proposed National Environmental Standard for Data and Information. We recommend a more holistic approach than is currently proposed, to enable a comprehensive understanding of environmental protection considerations. EIA should be charged with bringing together Australia's many excellent but disparate data sources such as the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting scheme data, National Pollutant Inventory, The Atlas of Living Australia and the National Performance Report for water utilities.

EIANZ has actively participated in the government's stakeholder consultations on its nature positive laws to date. We also made [a submission](#) to the government last month in which we go into further detail on our recommendations for strengthening the reforms.

Looking ahead, EIANZ welcomes further consultation on the third stage of the Nature Positive Plan. We also reiterate our support for the findings of the Samuel review, which proposed a comprehensive suite of improvements and highlighted the inadequacy of the current EPBC Act. Recognising the urgency of the need to reverse environmental decline, we call on the government to set a firm timeline for the crucial third stage of its reforms.