

Environment Ministers Meeting Communique

21 June 2024

Australia's Environment Ministers met today on the lands of the Cammeraigal people of the Eora Nation in Sydney to take critical steps towards a nature positive future and Australia's transition to a circular economy.

Creating a Nature Positive Australia

Ministers agreed to **ambitious national targets** for Australia's environment.

Australia is amongst the first countries in the world to set national targets to support the landmark Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

Ministers agreed to national targets:

- Protect and conserve 30% of Australia's landmass and 30% of Australia's marine areas by 2030 (30 by 30)
- Priority degraded areas are under effective restoration by 2030
- No new extinctions
- Minimise the impact of climate change on biodiversity
- Eradicate or control invasive species in priority landscapes and further minimise their introduction by 2030
- Increase Australia's circularity rate and reduce pollution and its impacts on biodiversity by 2030.

These national targets will be incorporated in Australia's updated Strategy for Nature. Australia will submit its Strategy for Nature as required under the Convention on Biological Diversity ahead of the 16th Conference of the Parties, in October 2024.

Ministers recognised the cooperation between all Australian jurisdictions to reach agreement on ambitious national targets. These targets demonstrate strong environmental leadership at home and abroad.

Ministers signed off on Australia's first national framework for recognising '**other effective area-based conservation measures**' (**OECMs**). This allows areas outside formal protected areas, managed for conservation, to be counted towards our '30 by 30' target. The framework will help landholders demonstrate that their efforts to conserve nature meet a clear standard, with the potential for international recognition. This will enable landholders and investors to contribute to 30 by 30, including through the Nature Repair Market.

The Commonwealth Environment Minister announced Defence is working towards recognising part of the Yampi Sound Defence Training Area in the north-west Kimberley region of Western Australia as an Australian OECM. The area of the Yampi Sound Training Area to be recognised spans approximately 150,000 hectares. It is a refuge for important biodiversity values, including species such as the Northern Quoll, Golden Bandicoot, Gouldian Finch, Western Partridge Pigeon and the Kimberley Brush-tailed Phascogale.

Ministers agreed to open public consultation on the draft **National 30 by 30 Roadmap**. The roadmap explains how Australia can achieve its goal of protecting 30% of land and 30% of marine areas by 2030. Meeting this important international and national target will help make nature more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Ministers noted the **Regional Planning Framework** and agreed to continue collaboration while supporting pilot regional plans. This will help governments protect nature while supporting priority developments. Regional planning can help protect nature at a landscape and/or seascape scale and speed up approvals by guiding projects to areas where there are fewer environmental impacts.

Building on in-principle agreement in late 2023 to endorse a **national feral cat threat abatement plan** once finalised, Ministers agreed to progress two more national threat abatement plans to combat the impact of priority invasives - **feral goats and escaped garden plants** - on native species. National threat abatement plans help coordinate action to tackle the biggest threats to Australia's unique and precious native plants and animals.

Ministers agreed to work towards the **Sustainable Ocean Plan** later this year and discussed the proposed vision, priorities, outcomes and actions relating to the environment (e.g. ocean and coastal protection and restoration).

Creating a Circular Economy

Ministers discussed progress on the Commonwealth's new **National Circular Economy Framework**, due to be finalised by December 2024. The Framework will drive a faster transition to a circular economy and ensure efficient use of key resources and materials in Australia. Ministers noted particular opportunities exist in the manufacturing, food and agriculture, resources and critical minerals sectors and the built environment.

Ministers agreed to encourage the development of **stronger end markets for recycled products**. A priority list of materials or products will be identified for consideration at the next EMM. Victoria will lead this work.

Ministers discussed progress on the **new national packaging regulatory scheme**. Ministers noted that advice for industry on anticipated design requirements, including recyclability, recycled content requirements and designing out chemicals from packaging placed on the market will be released at the end of 2024 to guide early efforts by industry and help to close the loop by generating demand for recycled soft plastics.

Ministers considered the growing challenge of soft plastics, and industry's slow progress to re-establish in-store collection since the collapse of the REDcycle scheme. Ministers confirmed their commitment to a circular economy for plastics established in Australia. States and territories noted progress on a roadmap to staged improvement in the harmonisation of kerbside collection to report back to Environment Ministers by the end of 2024.

This roadmap will address a pathway and criteria to **soft plastics collection** that considers national design standards currently under development, different collection approaches across metropolitan, regional and remote locations and national processing capacity. The roadmap may incorporate different timelines in different jurisdictions.

Ministers noted that removing **PFAS in packaging** is an urgent priority for all jurisdictions and will be dealt with through design standards in consultation with the Heads of EPA Australia and New Zealand (HEPA) with a report back to the next EMM.

Ministers acknowledged the work led by Queensland on **safe battery disposal**, and further discussed the issue of managing batteries as a matter of priority. Ongoing fires and emergency situations illustrate the critical importance of acting quickly on batteries to protect lives and property.

Ministers noted that battery fires are escalating as an issue and require interventions through the battery life cycle – from their design to the way they are stored and disposed of at their end of life. Ministers agreed to accelerate work towards product stewardship for all batteries jointly led by QLD, NSW and Victoria and that work on product stewardship including a draft Regulatory Impact Statement will be undertaken by December 2024.