



---

## **WILDLIFE AND THREATENED SPECIES BUSHFIRE RECOVERY EXPERT PANEL COMMUNIQUÉ 10 FEBRUARY 2020**

---

The Wildlife and Threatened Species Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel met in Canberra to recommend species requiring urgent management intervention following the recent extreme bushfires, and to help catalyse priority responses for the recovery of biodiversity in fire-affected areas.

The Panel welcomed the downgrading of fires across the east coast of Australia, with some now considered extinguished. Despite this respite, the Panel noted that the work for recovery of Australia's environment has only just begun. As fire grounds are progressively declared safe, on-ground assessments will validate species and locations most impacted by fire, and help direct recovery actions. While the dangers of fire in some areas are reducing, a new set of challenges is likely to emerge, such as deoxygenation of waterways due to the entry of ash. Vigilance is also required to protect unburnt areas that are providing important habitat for plants and animals from future fire and other threats.

The Panel, in collaboration with state and territory governments, agreed on a provisional list of 113 priority animals requiring urgent management intervention over the coming weeks and months. The Panel considered three factors in establishing the priority list: the species' conservation status before the fires, how much of its range was potentially impacted, and how vulnerable the species is to fire events. Some species were considered threatened before the fires, and the fires have now increased their extinction risk — species like the Kangaroo Island Dunnart and Kangaroo Glossy Black Cockatoo. Many other fire-affected species, like the Albert's Lyrebird and Parma Wallaby, were not considered threatened before the fires but have lost much of their habitat and may now be imperilled. The Panel reinforced that this list is provisional – it will change as more information becomes available. It does not yet include plants or many unlisted invertebrates, which are just as valued and will also have been impacted by the fires. A plant vulnerability assessment has commenced and work on unlisted invertebrates is planned. This is not just a list - this is a list that will inform action by governments at all levels in collaboration with many partners.

The Panel welcomed the first set of project proposals from state governments for emergency on-ground actions to be supported with funding from the Australian Government. The Panel is providing advice on these proposals to ensure they align with the Panel's national bushfire recovery objectives agreed on 15 January 2020 and are targeted at the species that are in most urgent need of support.

National collaboration is critical to an effective bushfire response. State and territory governments, the National Environmental Science Program, the National Bushfire Recovery Agency and other agencies across the Australian Government are all working together to prioritise and mobilise support for our wildlife.

Dr Dick Williams was welcomed as a new member of the Panel. His experience and expertise will bolster the Panel's capacity in fire ecology.

The next Panel meeting will be on Friday 21 February 2020.

The provisional list of priority animals requiring immediate intervention is available on the Department's website: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/bushfire-recovery/research-and-resources>.

- Dr Sally Box, Chair of the Wildlife and Threatened Species Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel.

## **Panel members**

### **Dr Sally Box (Chair)**

Threatened Species Commissioner  
Australian Government

### **Dr Dan Metcalfe**

CSIRO Land and Water

### **Professor John Woinarski**

Charles Darwin University  
National Environmental Science Program –  
Threatened Species Recovery Hub

### **Dr Dick Williams**

Charles Darwin University

### **Professor Sarah Legge**

Australian National University  
University of Queensland  
National Environmental Science Program –  
Threatened Species Recovery Hub  
Threatened Species Scientific Committee

## **Advisers**

Representatives from fire-affected states and territories (NSW, VIC, WA, SA, QLD, Tasmania, ACT)

### **Dr Stephen van Leeuwen**

Indigenous Advisory Committee

### **Dr Libby Rumpff**

University of Melbourne  
National Environmental Science Program –  
Threatened Species Recovery Hub

### **Assoc Professor Dale Nimmo**

Charles Sturt University

### **Dr Jenny Gray**

Zoos Victoria