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## WILDLIFE AND THREATENED SPECIES BUSHFIRE RECOVERY EXPERT PANEL COMMUNIQUÉ 24 JANUARY 2020

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The Wildlife and Threatened Species Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel met to continue urgent consideration of fire-affected wildlife, ecological communities and natural assets.

The bushfires are ongoing. The Panel acknowledged the inspirational efforts of wildlife hospitals, veterinarians, wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organisations, carers, land managers and volunteers who are at the frontline of looking after animals injured in the fires and undertaking emergency action to prevent species loss. Stories of success in protecting threatened species, like successful efforts to protect the critically endangered Wollemi Pine in New South Wales, are also providing cause for optimism in the face of these catastrophic bushfire events.

The Panel noted and welcomed the rapid on-ground work underway, supported by Federal and state governments, to meet the immediate needs of animals and plants in fire-affected areas, including pest animal and weed control, supplementary food and water, and fencing of remnant vegetation.

The Panel continued its work to identify species at greatest risk from the ongoing bushfire crisis, following publication of the national [initial list of fire-affected threatened species](#) earlier in the week. The Panel is working rapidly in collaboration with other scientific experts on a vulnerability assessment for fire-affected species, which takes into account each species' pre-fire imperilment (was it already threatened?), fire overlap (how much of its range was affected?) and attributes (does it have particular characteristics that make it more vulnerable to fire?). This assessment will identify priority species for emergency intervention and help inform the actions most urgently needed for these species. An interim list of high priority species, starting with birds, mammals, frogs and reptiles, will be released shortly.

Work to identify priority fish and plant species is underway, in collaboration with freshwater aquatic scientists and plant biologists; and comparable work on invertebrates is planned. Assessments have commenced to understand the impacts of fire on threatened ecological communities, World Heritage places and wetlands of international importance.

The Panel's recommendations on priority species, places and actions for emergency intervention will be guided by the Panel's immediate objectives to prevent extinction and limit decline, and will be informed by a 'prioritisation for action' framework. The Panel is prepared to make initial recommendations in the absence of perfect information, in recognition of the need to make quick decisions due to the risk of extinction. Further

recommendations will follow as the analysis progresses, and work is done to identify critical knowledge gaps.

The Panel is not working in isolation. The Panel is drawing on the diverse and deep expertise of the Australian scientific community to inform its work. The Panel, together with the Department, is working closely with state governments to foster a shared understanding of impacts and priorities for action.

The next meeting of the Panel is proposed for the week starting 3 February 2020. New data and information released prior to the next Panel meeting will be made available on the Department's website here: <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

### **Advisers**

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

### **Professor Sarah Legge**

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

### **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