



Wildlife and Threatened Species Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel

Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

The impact of the 2019-20 bushfires across Australia on human life, property and communities has been severe. The fires are also having a devastating impact on the environment, our native plants and animals, and our conservation programs.

The Minister for the Environment has asked the Threatened Species Commissioner, Dr Sally Box, to convene an Expert Panel to assist in prioritising recovery actions for native species, ecological communities, natural assets and their cultural values for Indigenous Australians, which have been affected by recent extreme fire events.

The Expert Panel will inform the further delivery of the Australian Government's response, including priority emergency actions to support impacted animals, plants, and ecosystems, as well as medium and long term responses required to support the recovery of Australia's environment.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Expert Panel will:

- Provide advice on the development and analysis of spatial and ecological information to assess the impact of recent fires on Australia's animals, plants, ecological communities and other natural assets and their cultural values for Indigenous Australians.
- Assist the Minister for the Environment and the Government to prioritise species and locations requiring intervention, taking into account the severity of impact on species and ecosystems, likelihood of intervention success, benefit to multiple species or natural assets from intervention, and other principles to be set by the Panel.
- Provide advice on the recovery actions needed to support the immediate survival and long-term recovery and resilience of affected animals, plants and ecological communities and natural assets and values, including (but not limited to) provision of critical resources (food, shelter), habitat protection and restoration, threat management and ex situ conservation (captive management, seed collection).

The Expert Panel may draw on other expertise as required, including from the National Environmental Science Program, the Threatened Species Scientific Committee and the Indigenous Advisory Committee.

The Expert Panel will support and promote collaboration and coordination across different government agencies, non-government organisations, scientific institutions and the private sector, so recovery efforts are coordinated and complementary. The Expert Panel may also be requested to provide advice on particular project proposals.

GOVERNANCE

The Expert Panel will provide its advice to the Minister for the Environment through the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

The Threatened Species Commissioner, Dr Sally Box, will chair the Expert Panel.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Expert Panel will be selected in order to provide expertise on key thematic and strategic priorities, including fire ecology, conservation biology and environmental decision-making. Representatives of bushfire-affected state and territory governments will be included to provide local knowledge and promote collaboration and coordination of fire-recovery activities across the country.

The Expert Panel will draw on other experts as required, including for example expertise in landscape restoration, species biology (terrestrial, freshwater, coastal), ecology, ex situ conservation (such as captive breeding and seed banking), heritage values, and Indigenous cultural heritage and ecological knowledge.

TIMEFRAME AND MEETINGS

The Expert Panel will be appointed for an initial period of 6 months, with the possibility of extension, and will meet as required.

<u>Member</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Area of Expertise</u>
Dr Sally Box (Chair)	Threatened Species Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Implementation of threatened species recovery policies and programs
Professor John Woinarski (Deputy Chair)	Charles Darwin University	Conservation biology
Professor Sarah Legge	Australian National University	Ecology, feral predator expertise
Dr Stephen van Leeuwen	Indigenous Advisory Committee	Indigenous perspectives, plant ecology, fire ecology
Dr Libby Rumpff	University of Melbourne	Environmental decision making and prioritisation
Assoc Professor Dale Nimmo	Charles Sturt University	Animal ecology, fire ecology, ecosystem resilience and disturbance
Dr Jenny Gray	Zoos Victoria	Captive breeding, wildlife care and rehabilitation, first response / critical response
Dr Dan Metcalfe	CSIRO Land & Water	Landscape ecology
Dr Dick Williams	Charles Darwin University	Plant ecology, fire regime/ ecology, vegetation dynamics and disturbance

<u>Adviser</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Area of expertise</u>
Government expert from each bushfire-affected state and territory	State and territory government departments	State/Territory environment expertise and active involvement in state/territory fire response