

# Towards Conservation & Recovery of Victoria's Biodiversity

## Our Position at a Glance:

December 2022

**We are losing our biodiversity. Australia has already lost over 100 native species since the arrival of Europeans, and more than 1,800 species are facing extinction due to the impacts of land clearing, invasive species, chemical pollutants, and the changing global climate.**

This is an existential crisis parallel to climate change and environmental pollution. We are losing more biodiversity than any other developed country, and inadequate action will cost Victoria billions.

Our agricultural industry alone is valued at \$17.5 billion annually. Our national parks and conservation reserves generate over \$1 billion through tourism, save up to \$200M in population health benefits, provide over \$80M in water purification services, and mitigate almost \$100M in damages to public and private infrastructure associated with flooding and coastal erosion.

We must act immediately to recover what we can and prevent further loss. Victoria's Science Society seeks the following actions:

### **Action 1: RECOGNISE First Nations' Leadership in Ecological Management**

Significant cultural change is required; our uniquely adapted ecosystems must inform the regional identities of all Victorians. Victorians must respect the claim of First Peoples to cultural custodianship of our State's many landscapes and ecosystems and form a deeper relationship with Country.

### **Action 2: RESOURCE Local Ownership & Leadership of Restoration Ecology Projects**

We need to translate decades of research into accessible field guides for local people to initiate ecological restoration projects as citizen scientists and conservation volunteers, matched up with recognised expertise in restoration ecology and funding for field work.

### **Action 3: APPOINT an Independent Regulator to Govern Biodiversity Values in Victoria**

Half of Victoria's land area has been cleared since European colonisation. An ombudsman must be appointed with due powers of review and veto in the state's planning system to protect what remains through the following measures:

1. Adding a Conservation Significance classification layer to the State's planning system
2. Regulation of the finance sector to restrict biodiversity negative investment
3. No Net Loss: Reform and constrain offset programs to operate within sites of impact

### **Action 4: ESTABLISH Funding Diversity for an Intersectoral Nature Fund**

Convene leaders within the research, business, community, First Nations, and philanthropic sectors as Trustees to resource and transparently govern a perpetual, science-backed Nature Fund for Victoria.

### **Action 5: PROVIDE Effective Investment Instruments for the Business Sector**

Create effective & transparent investment instruments in biodiversity conservation for the Business Sector by:

1. Reforming the Treasury Corporation of Victoria's Sustainability Bond Framework
2. Developing a model business case for nature-positive measures
3. Building awareness and engagement campaigns for business

### **Action 6: CREATE an Independent Intersectoral Taskforce for Biodiversity Recovery & Conservation in Victoria**

A whole-of-society crisis requires a whole-of-society response. Each sector of our society has a role to play, but we must coordinate closely to collaborate effectively. An independent taskforce is needed to oversee the implementation of these and further actions, operating as a partnership between all sectors.