



'This is a crisis': The Territory's peak environment groups respond to State of the Environment Report

The Northern Territory's nature is in crisis, the two peak environment bodies of the Northern Territory have declared in response to the State of the Environment report released earlier today.

The Environment Centre NT and the Arid Lands Environment Centre are jointly calling for greater protections and stronger nature laws at both a Northern Territory and Commonwealth level, as they warn that the Report paints a dire picture of the state of nature in the Territory.

The key finding of the Report was that the overall state of the environment in Australia, on all major indicators, is poor and deteriorating. The report confirms that invasive species, habitat loss, land clearing, pollution, resource extraction and climate change are the key drivers of biodiversity loss. Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek, in releasing the [report](#) today at the National Press Club, made a commitment to:

- amend our federal environmental laws by 2023;
- double the number of Indigenous rangers by the end of the decade;
- increase funding for Indigenous Protected Areas;
- ensure that 30% of Australia's land mass is protected in our national reserve system by 2030; and
- increase funding for protection of threatened species.

Co-Director of the Environment Centre NT, Kirsty Howey says:

"The State of the Environment report makes very clear that we are facing an existential crisis in the Northern Territory.

"Research last year indicated that our tropical northern savannas are the second most intensely collapsing ecosystem in Australia after the Great Barrier Reef. We are in the middle of an extinction crisis, with northern Australia experiencing the highest rate of mammal extinction in the world.

Modelling shows that climate change may make the Top End unliveable by 2070.

"This is not alarmism—it is the sober reality we are facing, and it should be a clarion call for action from both the Northern Territory and Federal Governments."

"Instead of protecting our nature, we are seeing plans pursued in the Northern Territory to open up climate-wrecking fossil fuel projects such as the Barossa offshore project and Beetaloo Basin. The planned expansion of the cotton industry in the Northern Territory will entail the deforestation of thousands of hectares of our precious savanna, and the extraction of billions of litres of water from our stressed water systems. Land clearing rates have tripled in just 4 years in the Northern Territory, and plans are underway to open our rivers to floodplain harvesting and our aquifers to water mining. It's the Murray Darling Basin 2.0 – the very last thing we need."

"Fixing this paltry state of affairs should be a priority of the Fyles and Albanese Governments. While we are heartened by some of the commitments made by Minister Plibersek for reform, we need new laws and massive injections of funding for management, enforcement and compliance of those laws – at *both* a Territory and Federal level - to ensure our nature is protected now and into the future. We also need an end to new fossil fuel projects, which is pushing us towards the precipice of climate collapse."

Alex Vaughan, Policy Officer at the Arid Lands Environment Centre says, "We know that our arid land environments are in a state of decline and undergoing ecosystem collapse. Invasive species such as buffel grass, wildfires, land clearing, climate change, resource extraction and groundwater depletion are the key drivers to biodiversity loss here. This echoes key drivers nationally."

"In the Northern Territory, there are 141 threatened fauna and 84 threatened flora. We know the threats, but there are limited laws and policies that exist which can genuinely protect the Northern Territory's diverse and rich ecosystems."

"Concerningly, what we are seeing on the ground is an increase in the Northern Territory's nature being sacrificed for large-scale extraction of gas and water. This is resulting in land clearing applications such as that at Singleton Station which propose to clear known bilby habitat. It is also resulting in a huge increase in the Northern Territory's greenhouse gas emissions – up some 46% on 2005 levels. We're going backwards instead of forwards in the Northern Territory at a rate not seen in any other Australian jurisdiction."

"Reversing ecological decline needs to be an urgent priority of the Federal and Northern Territory Governments. It should be viewed as an opportunity to conserve what is cherished and valued by so many across the Territory."

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