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27<sup>th</sup> January 2023

The Hon Stephen Jones MP  
Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services  
The Treasury  
Australian Government

Dear Hon. Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services,

## **RE: Australian Government 2023-24 Pre-Budget submissions**

The Urban Bushland Council (UBC) welcomes an opportunity to make a pre-budget submission to the Australian Government.

The UBC is an incorporated, not for profit organisation registered as a charity (<https://www.bushlandperth.org.au/>).

Our organisation is a voluntary community association of 87 member groups (each with their own local membership from 10-165 individuals) and 100+ individual members – all of whom have a common interest in the conservation of our natural biodiversity – often, but not always focussing on urban bushlands and wetlands.

We advocate to all levels of Government for natural areas protection. We do this with limited resources through the amazing efforts of our 'Friends Groups' and their many volunteers – from all walks of life 'working' to improve and maintain the health of patches of neighbourhood nature – many working in close collaboration with your department and their local council.

### **Requests for inclusion in the Australian Government 2023-24 Budget**

**Biodiversity conservation** has been seriously under-funded for many decades. It needs to be made a high priority in the next budget.

The following new additions to the 2023-2024 budget are strongly recommended.

1. Funding to fully implement **all** recommendations of Professor Graeme Samuels' Review of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act*. This will require significant additional budget funding to employ additional scientists and other skilled staff in the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the **Environment** and

Water (DCCEEW).

Notably Minister Plibersek has made a commitment to implement the findings.

2. Implement the *Landmark UN Biodiversity Agreement* in which the Parties including Australia adopted the “*Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*” (GBF), **including four goals and 23 targets for achievement by 2030.**

This was adopted at the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity COP 15 held in December 2022 at Montreal Canada.

**All the goals and targets need to be enacted in WA.**

For example, the funding as specified under Goal D as below is much needed in Australia, and especially in our biodiverse WA.

**“GOAL D**

*Adequate means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to and transfer of technology to fully implement the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework are secured and equitably accessible to all Parties, ....., progressively closing the biodiversity finance gap of \$700 billion per year, and aligning financial flows with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.”*

Some examples of what is needed are below.

3. **WA’s South West Biodiversity hotspot:** one of 36 hotspots globally recognised, and one of only two in Australia, for conservation priority because it is under threat, and with less than 30% of native vegetation remaining. Thus, under **Targets 3 and 4**, it should all be conserved, with no more clearing. Also threatening processes need to be managed and controlled. (see 4 below).

Add a new section in the *EPBC Act* to provide for the SW hotspot’s **protection and management**, and invest in **additional DCCEEW staff and resources in WA** to provide this protection and management, with an enforced end to clearing and net loss.

4. **Target 6: Provide a unit for control of invasive species.**

New federal funding for control of invasive species in conjunction with and in collaboration with the WA State Government including Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and local government authorities is much needed. For example, feral cats, foxes, rabbits, cane toads and environmental weeds are major destroyers of biodiversity of national significance. This control needs to be across all landholdings and government lands.

5. Under **Target 4**, provide staff and resources to enforce the ‘Approved Conservation Advices’ for *EPBC Act* listed endangered ecological communities. These state aims including to:
  - “*PROTECT the ecological community to prevent its further loss of extent and condition*”;
  - to “*RESTORE the ecological community*”.

Also, for endangered species, there is a need to enforce *EPBC Act* ‘**Approved Recovery Plans**’. This means there must be enforcement of no more clearing of these ecological communities and habitats of endangered species.

This is much needed for example for the Banksia Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain listed as endangered, and for the critically endangered Tuart Forests and Woodlands of the Swan

Coastal Plain and for the critically endangered WA Wheatbelt Woodlands.

Many more ecologists and other scientists and experts are needed to provide this essential 'environmental protection'.

**6. End deforestation, and provide a Transition Fund, and plantations**

Native forest logging and forest 'thinning' must be stopped in WA's south west region, and elsewhere.

Indeed the WA state government has a program to end native forest logging by end of 2024, but it needs to stop sooner and ongoing forest thinning must be stopped. Native forest logging to supply woodchips for export should be stopped.

Provision of a 'Transition Fund' in the federal budget could provide funding for people currently in the forest industry to re-train for other work opportunities, or for initiation of timber plantations on suitable cleared lands, or to move to biodiversity restoration work (this is part of Goal A), or to move to other locations to live and work.

Provide budget funding for timber plantations with suitable native and limited other species (eg pines) only on suitable land already cleared to provide for Australia's needs for timber products.

**7. The above proposals are estimated to cost \$1 Billion.**

We welcome the opportunity to further elaborate on any of these points.

Vice Chairperson  
**Urban Bushland Council WA Inc**  
(08) 9420 7207 0407180660