



A 100-Day environmental action plan for environment and water security



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Protecting our future: A 100-day action plan for environment and water security

The new term of the Albanese led Labor government begins amid growing environmental pressures and rising expectations for decisive action. The proposed 100-day plan outlines ten strategic priorities to accelerate progress, strengthen conservation outcomes, and build resilience across Australia's natural systems. It builds on existing policy frameworks and commitments, offering a comprehensive approach to balancing biodiversity protection with climate infrastructure needs, enhancing water security, and positioning Australia as a regional leader in ecological stewardship ahead of potential COP31 co-hosting with the Pacific Islands in 2026.

With the mandatory climate disclosure regime operational since January 2025, this plan responds to investor expectations for robust environmental policies that support conservation goals and climate resilience. It ensures Australia's natural assets remain protected while enabling the clean energy transition essential for long-term sustainability.

Priority actions for the first 100 days

1. Initiate Australia's a national climate risk assessment

Commission a comprehensive cross-sectoral risk report identifying climate threats to critical infrastructure, biodiversity hotspots, agricultural systems, and public health networks. This foundational assessment will provide evidence for all future adaptation planning and investment decisions.

Coordinate closely with Treasury to quantify economic implications and with Defence to assess national security vulnerabilities, ensuring climate risks are integrated into whole-of-government planning and budget processes.

2. Develop a national adaptation and resilience strategy

Build directly on the climate risk assessment findings to create a comprehensive policy blueprint detailing coordinated actions across federal, state, and local government levels. Ensure First Nations leadership in both design and implementation phases, recognising Indigenous knowledge systems and land management practices as essential components of Australia's climate resilience.

Establish clear timelines, funding mechanisms, and accountability measures for adaptation actions across all sectors. This strategy should also incorporate circular economy initiatives, like targets for plastic waste reduction and recycling innovation, which are critical for long-term sustainability and resource efficiency.

3. Strengthen biodiversity protection and restoration programs

Significantly increase funding allocation for habitat restoration programs, prioritizing post-bushfire regions and climate-critical ecosystems. Update threatened species listings and protection measures using the latest climate projection data to ensure conservation efforts account for shifting habitat ranges and emerging threats.

This must include a robust plan for invasive species management, which is one of the largest threats to Australia's biodiversity. Develop landscape-scale conservation corridors supporting wildlife movement and renewable energy infrastructure development.

4. Review and modernise the Murray-Darling Basin Plan

Ensure full compliance with existing water recovery targets while initiating comprehensive stakeholder consultations to update the Plan for future climate scenarios. It is also essential to emphasize the need for transparent reporting on water recovery progress, as the process has been criticised in the past for lack of accountability and clarity.

Address the challenges of reduced water availability and altered flow patterns by developing adaptive management approaches that protect both environmental flows and productive agricultural uses. Engage Traditional Owners, irrigators, and ecological groups in designing climate-resilient water allocation frameworks.

5. Expand urban water resilience programs

Partner with state and local governments to establish dedicated funding streams for green infrastructure deployment in heat-prone and flood-prone urban areas. Focus on nature-based solutions including urban wetlands, permeable surfaces, and green corridors that provide multiple benefits including stormwater management, urban cooling, and biodiversity habitat. Prioritise vulnerable communities and areas with limited existing green infrastructure.

6. Launch the national nature finance taskforce

Launch the National Nature Finance Taskforce with an accompanying green skills agenda to support workers and communities adapting to the clean economy transition. This ensures that the shift towards environmental restoration and nature-based solutions also delivers equitable employment outcomes.

Design innovative nature-based credit markets, including biodiversity and reforestation credits, that create financial incentives for conservation and restoration activities. Engage superannuation funds and institutional investors in co-financing large-scale green restoration projects, leveraging Australia's \$3.5 trillion superannuation sector for environmental outcomes. Establish rigorous standards and verification processes to ensure ecological integrity and prevent greenwashing.

7. Tighten environmental approvals under EPBC Act

Finalise long-awaited updates to Australia's national environment laws to create more streamlined but significantly strengthened environmental impact assessment processes. Ensure carbon offset projects meet the highest integrity standards with robust additionality requirements and permanent protection mechanisms. Develop fast-track pathways for renewable energy projects with minimal environmental impact while maintaining strict protections for matters of national environmental significance.

These reforms must incorporate the recommendations of the Samuel Review of the EPBC Act. The review called for binding national environmental standards, greater transparency, and an independent watchdog. Failing to legislate these changes risks further declining environmental trust and biodiversity outcomes.

8. Deliver the national water grid roadmap

Prioritise infrastructure projects, ensuring long-term water security for productive agriculture and Indigenous communities under increasingly variable rainfall patterns. Focus on projects that enhance water storage, improve distribution efficiency, and provide drought resilience for critical agricultural regions. Ensure Indigenous water rights and cultural values are protected and enhanced through infrastructure development.

9. Integrate environmental monitoring with climate data

Launch a comprehensive Climate & Nature Observatory utilising satellite technology, ground-based sensors, and citizen science networks to track land-use changes, drought conditions, flood impacts, and ecosystem health in real-time.

Provide open-access data platforms that support research, policy development, and community decision-making while building Australia's capacity for evidence-based environmental management and early warning systems.

10. Convene the national environment and water ministers' council

Establish regular high-level coordination meetings to align federal and state priorities on biodiversity conservation, water security management, and nature-based climate adaptation strategies. Develop national frameworks that enable consistent approaches across jurisdictions while respecting state responsibilities.

Focus on creating integrated policy responses that address the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and water security through collaborative governance arrangements.