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Dear Ms Crombie

National Parks Association of Queensland Submission :
Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Agreement on a
Common Assessment Method for Listing of Threatened Species and Threatened Ecological
Communities

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Agreement on a Common Assessment Method for Listing of Threatened Species and Threatened Ecological Communities (hereby referred to as the MOU).

Established in 1930, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) is an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation. NPAQ is dedicated to promoting the conservation of nature through the development and good management of protected areas in Queensland.

Submission: Intergovernmental MOU Agreement on a Common Assessment Method for Listing of Threatened Species and Threatened Ecological Communities

NPAQ welcomes the opportunity to make a submission regarding the MOU. In particular, it is reassuring to see a concerted move towards great national consistency with regards to the process and outcomes of assessments for listing of threatened species and ecological communities.

NPAQ has prepared a submission focussing on the following items:

- The importance of applying an agreed, consistent, national approach to assessing and listing threatened species and threatened ecosystems based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List Categories and Criteria.

- Ensuring the representation of species across taxonomic groups.

- Implementing any reforms required to apply the common method in each jurisdiction.

National approach to assessing and listing threatened species and threatened ecological communities

NPAQ supports an agreed, consistent and national approach to assessing and listing threatened species and ecosystems in Queensland and Australia based on the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria.

The IUCN Red List and assessment process endeavours to be both quantitative and comprehensive, making it an essential data set for informing conservation planning (Lamoreux et al. 2003). In parallel, the newly developed IUCN Red List of Ecosystems is a valuable addition to the toolbox of conservation managers providing criteria to examine ecosystems and their functionality. Rodrigeuz et al. (2014) state the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems aims to systematically assess all freshwater, marine, terrestrial and subterranean ecosystem types of the world at a global level by 2025. Applying this approach via robust and repeatable assessments ensures a rigorous technical base. Threatened ecosystems lists can then be developed at the regional, national and sub-national levels. The MOU drafted provides a solid basis for this to be achieved in the Australian context.

Australia has been described as a megadiverse country with a very high percentage of endemic species (Walsh et al. 2012). For example 45% of Australia's birds and 89% of Australia's reptiles only occur in Australia. Added to this is a wide array of anthropogenic pressures resulting in one of the highest extinction rates (Cork et al. 2006; Lindenmayer, 2007; and Kingsford et al. 2009).

The recently released Action Plan for Australian Mammals flags that Australia has the highest modern record of mammalian extinction along with a large proportion of extant mammals under threat. McDonald et al. (2014) urges urgent and targeted actions to avoid further extinctions.

These points serve to highlight the importance of ensuring rigour in both the formation and ongoing review of the threatened species and ecosystems list and any subsequent application of this information in conservation policy and management in Australia.

Ensuring the representation of species across taxonomic groups

Legislation for threatened species is intended to encapsulate and afford protection to species which meet the assessment criteria. In practice however, there is a tendency for bias towards an uneven allocation of conservation efforts.

Walsh et al. (2012) describe this bias towards 'charismatic' flora and fauna in listing and legislation, which may then have a flow on effect to conservation efforts being applied. This may be cause for concern if the resulting threatened species lists fail to fully encapsulate the status of underrepresented species.

Given conservation efforts are often based on the species flagged in these lists, populations of underrepresented species may suffer further decline in the interim. On a related note, as Walsh et al. (2012) explain, there is also lost potential for recovery, and therefore achieving the greatest conservation effort possible.

NPAQ believes it is vital to bear this bias in mind when assessing threatened species and ecosystems under a common method.

Implementing any reforms required to apply the common method in each jurisdiction

NPAQ welcomes legislative development and change as required to implement a consistent approach and stresses the important of consultation to ensure rigour in both the process and taxonomic representation.

NPAQ recommends:
1. Queensland becoming a signatory to the MOU.

2. Ensuring the representation of species across taxonomic groups to encapsulate and afford protection to all species which meet the assessment criteria.

3. Ongoing consultation regarding development and implementation of the common assessment method at both state and national levels with conservation groups.

Thank you for considering NPAQ's submission.

Yours sincerely

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