

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FINAL REPORT

Summary

At its 61st Session in 2006, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) designated the year 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity (A/RES/61/203) to raise awareness about the vital role of biodiversity in sustaining life on earth. Coordination of activities for the year was undertaken by the Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity as the General Assembly's biodiversity focal point.

Australia welcomed the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 as an opportunity to:

- raise awareness of how important biodiversity is to our lives
- demonstrate our strong commitment to protecting biodiversity, and
- strengthen our efforts to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss.

An *Australian Government Celebration Plan* was developed and submitted to the CBD Secretariat during June 2010.

Australia celebrated the year with a number of activities and announcements with a biodiversity focus. These activities ranged from the release of a revised national biodiversity strategy through to a school based environment discovery program in the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

More details of these activities are outlined below.

Bush Blitz

Date	15 February 2010
Activity type	Launch of a three-year multi-million dollar cross-sectional partnership to identify the plants and animals in Australia's protected areas.
URL	www.bushblitz.org.au

Australia launched its celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity jointly with the launch of Bush Blitz - a pioneering three-year multimillion dollar partnership to identify the plants and animals in Australia's protected areas. An astounding three-quarters of Australia's biodiversity is yet to be identified, Bush Blitz hopes to put a dent in that number. No country has documented the biodiversity that exists in their protected areas in this way, let alone undertaken across an entire continent.

The program was launched on the 15th of February 2010, by the former Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP.

"In this International Year of Biodiversity, Bush Blitz scientists will provide the baseline data that will help us protect our biodiversity. This is an investment in science-based decision making that will pay off for generations to come."

A national 'snapshot' of Australia's reserve system will enable more strategic acquisition of new reserves, enable world-leading management of existing reserves and allow preparation of climate change responses. The technology, information and partnerships required to assess the adequacy of Australia's reserve system at a national scale have not existed – until now.

Teams of scientists will conduct six major biological surveys each year throughout Australia - discovering new species, making new records of species and reporting on them. Surveys will be conducted in the approximately 300 reserves that have been added to the National Reserve System within the past 15 years with Australian Government funding.

Bush Blitz is a cross-sector partnership drawing on the knowledge and expertise of government, non-government organisations, industry and science to document the biodiversity of the oldest continent on earth.

The Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities (CERF) & National Environmental Research Program (NERP)

Date	19 February 2010
Activity type	Launch of a biodiversity special focus for future research investment.
URL	http://www.environment.gov.au/about/programs/nerp/index.html

On 19 February 2010, the former Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, announced that the portfolio's future environmental research investment will focus on biodiversity, as part of Australia's International Year of Biodiversity activities.

"The Australian Government recognises the vital role research plays in delivering environmental management, policies and programs," Minister Garrett said. "As Australia confronts the challenges of climate change, we are aiming for both a stronger, more resilient environment and a sustainable economy."

This investment is being delivered through the new National Environmental Research Program (NERP), the successor of CERF, and will provide around \$20 million each year for environmental research to improve our capacity to understand, manage and conserve Australia's unique biodiversity and ecosystems through the generation of world-class research, and its delivery to Australian environmental decision-makers and other stakeholders.

The International Year of Biodiversity provided an excellent opportunity to redirect funds to targeted areas of biodiversity related research while building on the lessons learned from the current program.

2010 - United Nations International Year of Biodiversity Australian Government Report

On 6 December the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, announced that five research hubs will be funded by this department under the new NERP. Up to \$68.5M in funding over 4 years will be made available to provide first-class science that is essential for sustainably managing Australia's environment.

2010 CERF Conference

Date	24-26 May 2010
Activity type	Conference
URL	www.conlog.com.au/cerf

The 2010 CERF Conference focused on how CERF research has influenced and contributed to contemporary environmental policy. It was held at Old Parliament House 24-26 May 2010. The conference featured presentations from Australia's leading environmental researchers as well as up and coming researchers.

Science Meets Parliament

Date	10 March 2010
Activity type	Breakfast briefing entitled 'International Year of Biodiversity: So what's biodiversity done for me? Why biodiversity matters: the economic, social and environmental perspectives' bringing together scientists for a series of face-to-face meetings with parliamentarians to discuss a range of science and innovation issues.
URL	www.fastsof.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1 www.fastsof.org/images/Smp2009/100305%20smp%20media%20alert.pdf

A successful breakfast briefing on the importance of biodiversity was hosted by the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS) at Parliament House on 10 March to honour the International Year of Biodiversity. The breakfast briefing was titled 'International Year of Biodiversity: So what's biodiversity done for me? Why biodiversity matters: the economic, social and environmental perspectives'. The former Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts, the Hon Peter Garrett MP, gave the welcoming address. The breakfast briefing was part of *Science meets Parliament*, a flagship event of Australia's scientific community.

Panellists involved in the breakfast briefing included:

- Prof Jeff Bennett, Director Environmental Economics Research Hub, ANU who discussed the impact and importance of biodiversity on the economy
- Dr Brian Walker, Research Fellow CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems & Program Director and Chair of the Board of the Resilience Alliance Biodiversity in our lives gave a presentation on '*from insects to ecosystems*'
- Dr Tony Press, Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre presented a case study: '*krill, small but significant*'.

EnviroQuest 2010

Date	2010
Activity type	A school program that facilitates students exploring the connections between people, plants and animals through inquiry based explorations and hands-on learning experiences.
URL	www.anbg.gov.au/gardens/education http://www.anbg.gov.au/gardens/index.html

Recognising that children are the key to the future of biodiversity and in order to involve the younger generation in the International Year of Biodiversity, the Australian National Botanic Gardens celebrated with EnviroQuest. EnviroQuest is a program for schools that invites students and teachers to venture to the 40 hectare outdoor living classroom to discover Australia's rich natural and cultural heritage. Here, students can explore the connections between people, plants and animals through inquiry based explorations and hands-on learning experiences.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens offers students the opportunity on site to engage with a wide range of Australian ecosystems. Children can investigate the adaptation of Australian plants as they walk from a Tasmanian rainforest up the east coast to the World Heritage listed rainforest of northern Queensland and then to the arid mallee, the alpine regions and Australian grasslands. It is an opportunity for students to explore around one-third of Australian plant species.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens, established in 1970, maintains a scientific living collection of native plants from all parts of Australia. The plants are displayed for the enjoyment and education of visitors and are used for research into plant classification and biology. The Australian National Herbarium, the world's largest single collection of Australian preserved plant specimens is closely associated with the living collection. The Gardens also cultivates plants threatened in the wild, helping protect them against extinction and providing information which might assist re-introduction to their natural habitat.

Clean-up Australia Day

Date	7 March 2010
Activity type	A community based clean-up program held on a single day each year.
URL	www.cleanup.org.au/au/

Hundreds of thousands of volunteers helped celebrate Clean Up Australia Day's 20th anniversary in this International Year of Biodiversity. On 7 March volunteers donned gloves to clean up Australia's major rubbish hotspot areas of the most frequently dropped rubbish, including cigarette butts and recyclables such as glass, plastic and paper.

The Clean Up Australia Day event encourages and inspires hundreds of thousands of Australians to take to their local park, beach, bushland and streets to make a difference.

In 1989 an 'average Australian bloke' had a simple idea to make a difference in his own backyard - Sydney Harbour. This simple idea has now become the nation's largest community-based environmental event, Clean Up Australia Day.

Over the campaign period, now in its twentieth year, some 588,000 volunteers across Australia have filled Clean Up Australia Day rubbish bags with approximately 15,560 tonnes of rubbish.

Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress 2010

Date	11-16 April 2010
Activity type	An international conference that explored how nature contributes to individual wellbeing and broader social benefits.
URL	www.healthyparkshealthypeoplecongress.org/index.php .

The inaugural Healthy Parks, Healthy People Congress 2010 was held in Melbourne from 11-16 April 2010 and hosted by Parks Victoria. This ground breaking international event explored how nature contributes to individual wellbeing and broader social benefits. The Congress attracted some 1000 participants from Australia and around the world.

Participants to the *Healthy Parks, Healthy People Congress* came from many different sectors, representing urban planning, community development, physical and mental health, tourism, education, recreation, ecology and park management (urban and protected area) and industrial and technological sectors. This diversity of perspectives allowed participants to understand the benefits of nature through many eyes.

The Congress:

- explored the many societal benefits provided by parks and nature
- demonstrated the relevance of parks and nature to society
- shared knowledge, initiatives and innovations achieved by collaborating across sectors
- developed an international agenda that reunites nature with social health
- identified opportunities for better collaboration at global, international and local levels
- established an information exchange network.

The Congress was a milestone as we begin to recognise the close links between nature and broader social health objectives. By reinforcing the connections between the health of communities and the health of protected areas and parks, we can nurture a truly sustainable society which recognises its dependence on the natural environment. Striking a balance between developmental and human needs for environmental services is a challenge confronting governments in a number of developing and developed countries alike.

Funding for museum biodiversity awareness projects

Date	April 2010
Activity type	Grants to museums to help raise awareness of Australia's biological diversity by establishing a national framework to support local International Year of Biodiversity action.
URL	http://grants.innovation.gov.au/SCOPE/Pages/Home.aspx .

Australian museums were given \$300,000 to help raise awareness of Australia's biodiversity during the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity. The Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD) used the funds to establish a national framework to support local International Year of Biodiversity action that included a national website, marketing and promotional activities, and project officers to stage and support events.

CAMD also supported local awareness projects, ranging from walks and water-borne excursions, to performance and web-based activity through small grants rounds. The first five projects from Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and South Australia were launched by Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation and Industry, the Hon Richard Marles, on 22 April 2010.

This collaborative program, developed by Australia's major museums, is the first major initiative under Inspiring Australia, a national strategy to promote engagement with science. It is a partnership between CAMD and the Australian Government's Science Connections Program.

CAMD offered local museums up to \$5,000 in seed funding for projects that raise awareness of biodiversity issues. The first five local projects to receive seed funding were:

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery: "A Year of Wonder in the Island Arc"

Tasmania, with its living cargo of plants and animals, has been a separate island for 12 000 years. The wide variety of landscapes and habitats has been protected from some of the effects of climate change, human impact and introduced species that have caused extinctions in mainland Australia. Through a program of public lectures, curatorial talks, sessions in the Zoology Gallery, and web based outreach; visitors discovered Tasmania's ancient origins, unique biodiversity and the unusually high numbers of endemic animal and plant species that are present here.

South Australian Maritime Museum: "Diversity at Sea: Port River Dolphins"

The Diversity at Sea program enabled visitors to explore the rich biodiversity of South Australia's marine bioregions. The program drew in depth on the local and topical example of the Port River dolphin pod. Visitors engaged in innovative and experiential experiments using the South Australian Maritime Museum's resources including the museum's historic launch to watch and listen to the dolphins in their natural habitat. The program was based on a cross-disciplinary collaboration between a history museum, a conservation society and a state department for environment.

The Bug Blitz Trust and partners: "Ballarat Biodiversity Discovery"

Over a weekend, groups of visitors to Narmbool (a 2000 ha pastoral property near Ballarat with large tracts of bushland and biodiversity conservation zones and corridors) joined the Sovereign Hill education team and scientists from Museum Victoria in exploring the insect and other fauna diversity of a unique part of western Victoria. Groups of between 20-30 people walked the tracks on Narmbool, visiting sites to investigate terrestrial and aquatic invertebrate life.

Museum Victoria: "The Art of Scientific Observation"

To celebrate the Year of Biodiversity, Museum Victoria delivered a cross-disciplinary program of science, art and performance across Victoria during Science Week 2010. Entitled The Art of Scientific Observation, this outreach program was developed with local scientific and cultural partners in regional centres. The Art of Scientific Observation aimed to connect people with their local environment and foster collaboration between cultural and scientific organisations to engage new audiences via creative techniques including performance and drawing workshops. Through collaboration with local cultural centres and science research organisations, this project attracted participation from areas surrounding these regional centres.

Crack Theatre Festival: "Biodiversity Performance"

This project developed a new cross-artform work at the intersection of the 'two cultures': Science and the Arts. This emerging field is a fertile space for creative experimentation. Project managers David Finnigan and Gillian Schwab have a strong background in interdisciplinary practice and in communicating science concepts through performance. Drawing on the resources of the Australian Museum, the project was a convergence, a conversation and possibly a confrontation between artistic and scientific ways of seeing.

National Reserve System

Date	Ongoing
Activity type	Ongoing program to establish a network of protected areas (the National Reserve System).
URL	www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs/index.html

In the International Year of Biodiversity, Australia announced a number of new protected areas to add to its already impressive National Reserve System. The National Reserve System is the nation's premier investment in biodiversity conservation.

The National Reserve System is Australia's network of protected areas, conserving examples of our natural landscapes and native plants and animals for future generations. Based on a national scientific framework, it is the nation's natural safety net against our biggest environmental challenges and is the cornerstone of Australia's efforts to protect terrestrial biodiversity in a changing climate.

The reserve system includes more than 9,400 protected areas covering approximately 13.3 per cent of the country. It is made up of national parks, Indigenous lands, huge reserves run by non-profit conservation organisations, and ecosystems protected by farmers on their private working properties. These protected areas are all managed for conservation according to international guidelines.

The Australian Government has committed to increase the National Reserve System by 25% by 2014, through the addition of a further 25 million hectares through property purchases and the establishment of Indigenous Protected Areas.

Indigenous Protected Areas

Date	Ongoing
Activity type	Ongoing program to promote biodiversity and cultural resource conservation through Indigenous Protected Areas
URL	www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/index.html .

In April, traditional owners established the Kalka-Pipalyatjara Indigenous Protected Area over 580,000 hectares of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. A huge new protected area in South Australia's remote north will help protect one of the state's most endangered species – the warru or black-footed rock wallaby. The declaration creates a significant conservation corridor of more than 12 million hectares across state borders, as Kalka-Pipalyatjara connects Ngaanyatjarra IPA in Western Australia and the Watarru IPA in South Australia.

The latest IPA follows the declaration in March of two new Indigenous Protected Areas in the New South Wales tablelands. Tarriwa Kurrukun IPA and Boorabee and the Willows IPA protect stunning wetlands and stringy bark forests.

The Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) program has been successful in supporting Indigenous communities to contribute to Australia's national conservation goals, and we are starting to see anecdotal evidence of broader benefits from this work for the individuals and communities that are taking part. The IPA program, which commenced in 1998/1999 with the declaration of the first IPA at Nantawarrina in South Australia, was expanded under the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country initiative, with \$50 million allocated in 2008/09 over five years to improve and expand IPAs across Australia.

As at February 2011, Australia has 42 declared IPAs, with 40 other Indigenous communities in the process of deciding whether to declare their land as an IPA, and a further 5 Indigenous communities being supported to negotiate co-management arrangements over existing state parks and reserves. IPAs are voluntarily declared by their Indigenous land owners. Every IPA declaration makes an important contribution to Australia's nation-wide network of parks and reserves, the National Reserve System (NRS). Currently, declared IPAs cover over 23.9 million hectares of Indigenous owned lands across every state and territory in Australia, except the Australian Capital Territory. This represents over 25% of the entire Australian NRS, and nearly 20% of all Indigenous owned lands.

The IPA initiative works closely with the Government's Working On Country (WOC) initiative which provides wages for Indigenous Rangers. Each declared IPA is actively managed by its Indigenous owners through partnerships with Government and, in some cases, with the private and non-government sector. IPA rangers conduct land and cultural management activities on their traditional lands and undertake training to build their skills and capacity. The IPA program is successful because it builds on and values the knowledge, passion and commitment that Indigenous communities have for their land. It helps to build pride and self respect for those involved as well as contributing economic benefit to traditional communities, social cohesion of these communities and the ongoing education of children through the intergenerational transfer of traditional ecological and cultural knowledge. In addition, the IPAs are delivering important ecosystem services for all Australians by protecting the unique natural and cultural values of these often remote locations.

National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS)

Date	Launched October 2010
Activity type	Finalization of the Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010 – 2030
URL	http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/strategy/index.html

Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010 – 2030 (the Strategy) sets 10 national targets to measure the nation's progress in protecting our biodiversity. The Strategy is organised under three priorities for action: Engaging all Australians; Building Resilience in a Changing Climate; and Getting Measurable Results. All state and territory governments and the Australian Government have committed to the Strategy.

The CBD and the Strategy targets are complementary. The Strategy has identified additional priorities for conserving Australia's biodiversity not covered by the CBD targets but appropriate in the Australian context. This includes outcomes relating to environmental water allocations; ecological fire regimes; and the effectiveness and efficiency of biodiversity programs and investments.

The following 10 interim national targets for implementation in the first five-year period (i.e. by 2015): (1) Achieve a 25% increase in the number of Australians and public and private organisations who participate in biodiversity conservation activities; (2) Achieve a 25% increase in employment and participation of Indigenous peoples in biodiversity conservation; (3) Achieve a doubling of the value of complementary markets for ecosystem services; (4) Achieve a national increase of 600,000 km² of native habitat managed primarily for biodiversity conservation across terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments; (5) 1,000 km² of fragmented landscapes and aquatic systems are being restored to improve ecological connectivity; (6) Four collaborative continental-scale linkages are established and managed to improve ecological connectivity; (7) Reduce by at least 10% the impacts of invasive species on threatened species and ecological communities in terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments; (8) Nationally agreed science and knowledge priorities for biodiversity conservation are guiding research activities; (9) All jurisdictions will review relevant legislation, policies and programs to maximise

alignment with Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy; and (10) Establish a national long-term biodiversity monitoring and reporting system.

Three priorities for action have been identified in the revised strategy, namely, engaging all Australians in biodiversity conservation; building ecosystem resilience in a changing climate; and getting measurable results. Each of the priorities for action is supported by subpriorities, outcomes, measurable targets and actions.

Marine Bioregional Plans

Date	Ongoing
Activity type	Program to improve the way Australia's oceans are managed and ensure they remain healthy and productive. Marine bioregional planning focuses on the management of whole marine ecosystems, including the interactions of people and industry with our marine environment.
URL	http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/index.html

Australia has one of the largest marine regions in the world. The area is home to a spectacular array of species, many of which are unique to Australian waters. The protection and conservation of Australia's marine biodiversity took on a special emphasis during the International Year of Biodiversity.

Australia is in the process of developing five marine bioregional plans – the South-west, North, North-west, South-east and East regions which occur in waters from 3 to 200 nautical miles from shore - to better ensure the protection, conservation and sustainable use of Australia's marine environment.

The marine protected areas that will be established as a key element of the plans will meet the Australian Government's commitment towards the establishment of a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas by 2012 – an undertaking by all Australian governments.

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks

Date	February 2011
Activity type	Signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks
URL	http://www.cms.int/species/sharks/sharks_bkrd.htm

Australia has been actively involved in efforts to develop a global instrument for the conservation and management of migratory sharks under the Convention on Migratory Species and became a signatory to the instrument in January 2011. Australia will continue to be involved in the development of key actions to be included in the Memorandum's conservation plan.

The Memorandum was concluded on 12 February 2010. It covers the seven species of migratory shark currently listed on the Appendices of the Convention on Migratory Species — whale, basking, great white, porbeagle, longfin mako and shortfin mako sharks and the northern hemisphere population of spiny dogfish.

2010 - United Nations International Year of Biodiversity Australian Government Report

The Memorandum is a significant step forward in terms of international collaboration to better manage and conserve migratory shark species.

Antarctica

Date	Throughout 2010
Activity type	Package of special projects that highlight biodiversity efforts in Antarctica
URL	www.aad.gov.au/default.asp

Australia has a special relationship with Antarctica and is committed to protecting the Antarctic environment (including through improved environmental practices), and to conducting globally significant science (particularly climate change science). The Australian Antarctic Division, as the leader of the Australian Antarctic program undertook a number of activities to celebrate Australia's commitment to biodiversity conservation in Antarctica during the International Year of Biodiversity.

One activity was the Australian led multi-country project "Aliens in Antarctica" which examined the extent to which people from many countries unintentionally carry alien species, such as seeds and insects, into the Antarctic Region. The results of this project will contribute to the development of a strategy to minimise the effects of invasive alien species on the fragile Antarctic environment.

Other activities during the International Year of Biodiversity included a marine science voyage to assess the impacts of trawling on benthic habitats in the subantarctic and high Antarctic and the transfer of 20,000 specimens of Antarctic and sub-Antarctic flora to the Tasmanian Herbarium – a collection spanning almost 40 years.

Helping Islands Adapt Workshop

Date	11-16 April 2010
Activity type	Supported and participated in an international conference that explored Regional Action to Combat Invasive Species on Islands to Preserve Biodiversity and Aid Climate Change Adaptation
URL	http://www.conference.co.nz/index.cfm/ISW10 http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/index.html

Invasive species have a major impact on Australia's environment, threatening our unique biodiversity and reducing overall species abundance and diversity. For this reason Australia was proud to be a partner of the New Zealand Government workshop on Regional Action to Combat Invasive Species on Islands to Preserve Biodiversity and Aid Climate Change Adaptation.

The workshop (11-16 April 2010) was organised and hosted by the Government of New Zealand, held in conjunction with the Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and The Nature Conservancy, and was co-sponsored by Australia. The objective of the workshop was to strengthen and mobilise capacity on islands across the globe to address the threats posed by invasive species in a climate change context.