

Research Matters

Decentralising the protection of Australian threatened species

Background

This Research Matters is extracted from the APO Daily Briefing available from the Analysis and Policy Observatory (APO), see: <http://apo.org.au> APO is a not-for-profit, open access knowledge and evidence base for sharing and managing public policy and practice resources. The Institute of Public Affairs is a public policy think tank based in Melbourne. See: <https://ipa.org.au>

The paper indicates the increasing centralisation of public policy in Australia. Although the management of threatened species is the responsibility of States and Territories, because of the Constitution, increased evidence of a more national approach is to be found

Key matters raised in research - a summary

Environmental law in Australia has not only been expanding but also becoming more centralised. The delays that stem from this red tape create uncertainty, stymie investment, and hold back Australian prosperity. This paper emphasises one aspect of environmental law—the listing and protection of threatened species—and analyses potential reform directions. In summary:

- From 1992 to 2016 the number of threatened species of flora and fauna listed under federal environmental law in Australia increased by approximately 63 per cent;
- According to the available data, the number of species protected under state laws has also increased by varying amounts, led by Victoria (127% growth) and Queensland (102%);
- As of September 2017, 88.8% of species on the federal list is duplicated on at least one state species protection list;
- As of September 2017, each state includes a substantial number of species that are unique to those lists, contributing to regulatory uncertainty. This ranges from 40% (Western Australia) to 81% (South Australia).

National listing growth holds back development and prosperity because more major projects ultimately require additional federal approval. The federal regime, in combination with the equivalent state regimes, is riddled with regulatory overlap and uncertainty.

While well intentioned, multiple listing often does not assist managing threatened species.

Who is it useful for?

NSW State Government agency staff working in biodiversity, Local Government Biodiversity staff, Community organisations.

Where can you find it?

Full Report - Institute of Public Affairs: Morgan Begg, Darcy Allen, Daniel Wild authors

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