

# Plants protect from climate impacts

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Native vegetation must be restored to protect Australia's unique ecosystems from the impacts of climate change, according to scientists from the Australian National University.

A review published this week in the international, peer reviewed journal *Climatic Change*, found that large-scale restoration of native vegetation was the most frequently recommended action in the scientific literature to counter [climate change](#) effects on biodiversity.

Lead author, Dr Don Driscoll from the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the ANU, said protection of biodiversity needed to be included in any government policy on climate change.

“Reducing the area of native vegetation cleared is the most important action to take. But in areas that are already over-cleared, revegetation is essential.”

“It is pleasing to see that some of the Government's climate change policies are directed at reducing the threat that climate change poses to native plants and animals by allocating carbon tax revenue to restoration and landscape-scale planning.

“Carbon revenue provides a realistic means of funding revegetation. But climate change policy must also include safeguards that ensure biodiversity is protected, in addition to providing financial disincentives for emitting carbon.”

Dr Driscoll said the review identified additional policies that would lead to faster reduction in the risks to biodiversity.

“An overwhelming finding from our review is that there are many policy and management actions that can be taken now that would result in a rapid reduction in the threats of climate change to biodiversity,” he said.

“These are mainly actions that avoid further impacts such as stopping the introduction of new invasive species and preventing further habitat loss.

“National efforts must include engagement in international negotiations on climate change conventions, trade and conservation conventions.”

Dr Driscoll said the review also identified the need to fine-tune expectations of the extent to which we exploit natural resources.

“Water extraction, grazing and logging have well-recognised impacts on native ecosystems. These impacts are set to increase with climate change, so we suggest that re-evaluation and modification of the way that natural resources are managed is critical,” he said.

“Our review also shows that lack of knowledge is not a defence for not taking action now. We found that for the vast majority of threats to biodiversity, enough ecological knowledge and policy options already exist to make effective changes.

“If policy makers act today they can have a real impact on how the [biodiversity](#) crisis will unfold over coming decades.”

Provided by Australian National University

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