

Science plan to underpin Australia's future prosperity

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The first national strategy for ecosystem science, to underpin Australia's future growth, sustainability and prosperity, will be unveiled in Canberra today.

The plan aims to ensure that in 2035, Australia's managed and natural [ecosystems](#) will remain in as good a shape to support the industries, native wildlife, landscapes and community wellbeing in the future as they are today.

The plan envisions:

- A plan to engage the Australian public more closely in studying and protecting ecosystems
- Closer links between science and end users in industry, government and the community
- A continent-wide monitoring system reporting on the condition of Australian ecosystems
- Support for long-term research into the ways Australian ecosystems are changing
- Pooling of national ecosystem research data and stronger cross-disciplinary collaboration

"Ecosystem science is at the heart of all the really big national challenges facing Australia," says Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, Director of The University of Queensland's Global Change Institute.

"We must think and act strategically now, to ensure that we have the best trained people, infrastructure, research programs and resourcing in place to study, understand, and manage Australia's ecosystems in the future – for the good of all."

The Ecosystem Science Long-Term Plan sets out the vision, key directions and priorities for a strong and sustainable national ecosystem science capability over the coming twenty years. It was developed through consultation between scientists, academics, natural resource management experts, the general community and 'citizen scientists' with hundreds of people involved through a series of town hall meetings held around the nation over the past twelve months.

"Australian ecosystems encompass landscapes, coasts and marine areas, the living things that occupy them, their water, soils and atmosphere, and the dynamic interactions among all these parts," explains Professor Andy Pitman of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Climate System Science.

"Ecosystems are crucial in managing our carbon and water and many research communities need Australia's ecosystem scientists' expertise to help solve major national challenges. The ARC Centre of Excellence looks forward to working more with the ecosystem science community in the future."

"Globally, the benefit from ecosystem services has been valued at approximately \$125 trillion per year - compared to a global GDP of \$75 trillion. This makes [ecosystem services](#) the most valuable component of the Australian economy as a whole, contributing at least as much and maybe more than traded goods and services. Australian governments have long recognised the importance of [ecosystems research](#) as a national priority," says Professor Hoegh-Guldberg.

A key focus of the new plan is to engage the Australian community and industry more closely in understanding and caring for ecosystems.

"We need to encourage a public that is inspired, informed and empowered with knowledge and understanding of Australian ecosystems," he says.

"Indigenous Australians have long understood their value through a deep connection with country. However, many citizens do not fully appreciate the value of ecosystems and the goods and services they deliver, nor do they understand the threats our ecosystems now face. We need their support, understanding and participation."

Professor Pitman stated that "A central focus of the strategy is to develop systematic, continent-scale monitoring of essential ecosystem variables that reflect the health of our ecosystems. Equally important is to assemble all this data such that it is easily accessible to scientists, government and the public. The Ecosystem Science plan provides really critical strategies that lead in these directions and therefore to ensuring ecosystem science provides a key role in solving major environmental challenges."

Provided by Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network

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