

Australian Government  
The Treasury

RE: 2022-2023 Pre-Budget Submissions

To the Treasury,

Gecko Environment Council welcome the opportunity to provide input in to the 2022-23 budget. This financial year presents opportunities to ensure a transition from fossil fuels in order to reach targets agreed upon in the Paris Agreement and at COP-26 in Glasgow, and to uphold biodiversity in line with the Kunming Declaration signed at the COP-15 in October 2021.

Gecko Environment Council Assoc. Inc. is a not-for-profit environment association founded in 1989 and has been active for the past 32 years in protecting the environmental values and ecological sustainability of the Gold Coast, Queensland and, when appropriate, nationally. Gecko's Mission is *"To actively promote, conserve and restore the natural environment and improve the sustainability of the built environment of the Gold Coast region in partnership with our member groups and the wider community."*

**Transition from fossil fuels:** A smooth transition for workers from the fossil fuel industry to jobs in the renewable energy is critical. Our members are strongly of the opinion that the federal government must invest now in up-or reskilling workers from the coal, oil, and gas sectors, so that they can easily transition to employment in the renewable energy industry.

**Stop fossil fuel subsidies:** Subsidies given to the fossil fuel industry must cease in 2022-23. The federal government spent \$10.3 billion in the 2020-21 financial year on fossil fuel subsidies. This staggering amount of money is far better invested in actions taken to mitigate the effects of climate change in Australia and to keep global warming under 1.5 degrees Celsius, in line with the Paris Agreement. This huge sum of money can be more productively spent for a better and safer future for all Australians with boosted investment in renewable energy and natural carbon dioxide sinks such as mangroves, seagrass, and revegetating riparian zones. ~~are necessary~~. Gecko recommends funding natural carbon sequestration solutions. Gecko does not support funding in new technologies to capture and store carbon, which can emit more pollutants than they capture, as we have seen with Shell's carbon capture facility in Canada.

**Improving biodiversity and survival of species:** According to the Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment, over 1,700 species and ecological communities are at risk of extinction in Australia. Gecko strongly believes the Threatened Species Recovery Hub should be re-instated to give these threatened species and ecological communities a chance at survival in a time of mass extinction and increased frequency and severity of natural disasters associated with climate change.

Increases in the Protected Estate: Increased federal funding should be allocated to the States to expand their protected areas estate in order to achieve the 30 percent protected areas target by 2030 pledged at the COP-15 in Kunming to safeguard biodiversity. Further we do not support subsidies to the tourism industry in protected areas, which have a negative impact on biodiversity through vegetation clearing, disturbance, and spread of invasive species. The tourism industry has the other 60% of land area in which to invest and can demonstrate commitment to protection of biodiversity and protected areas by building infrastructure and resorts just outside of protected areas. This also assists local communities in the area.

The 2022-23 budget must deliver an increase in funding for renewable energy, cessation of subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, and increased funding for biodiversity and threatened species recovery if Australia is to meet the targets set in the Paris Agreement and pledges made at the COP-15 in Kunming.

Regards,

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