

## Engaging and integrating research, policy and community for effective biodiversity conservation

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Effective conservation and restoration of biodiversity in the face of human population growth, habitat destruction and climate change will be best achieved through co-operation between researchers, government agencies, non-government organisations and the community. Despite the potential for such proactive collaboration to deliver better conservation and management outcomes, examples of such collaborations are difficult to find. More active and holistic engagement by all parties is needed if this situation is to change for the better.

Scientific research is conducted in a very competitive, funding focused and objective driven environment. The collection of evidence-based scientific data often necessitates the extensive use of animals, including non-target model species, which impacts the welfare of individual animals and puts scientists at odds with some community groups. Nevertheless this is often necessary to provide sound science and reliable tools and recommendations. In many circumstances, wildlife management and conservation strategies aimed at maximising biodiversity will adversely impact the welfare of individual animals, for example in instances of overabundance or disease.

Greater engagement of the community, non-government organisations and government agencies in the initial planning and implementation of wildlife research and conservation strategies is needed. Social, economic and cultural knowledge and values need to be addressed. Better communication and education strategies need to be developed. A bid for a biodiversity focused co-operative research centre is currently being developed and offers a unique opportunity for engagement of interested parties in the conservation of Australia's biodiversity.