

August 2019

AILA Declares a Climate and Biodiversity Loss Emergency



Australian Institute of
Landscape Architects

Why is AILA declaring a Climate Emergency

In October 2018, an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change, reported that humanity has just 12 years to restrict global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius¹ above pre-industrial levels.

Climate change is already evident in Australia, where with a rise of 1.0°C we are disproportionately affected by longer, more intense droughts and extreme weather events. It is in our interest to reduce carbon emissions in all areas of our society and economy as quickly as possible to ensure the viability of the planet for future generations.

Why is AILA declaring a Biodiversity Loss Emergency?

Earth's ecosystems are in decline globally at rates unprecedented in human history – similarly, the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts for people around the world anticipated².

One million of the world's species are now under threat of extinction, according to the biggest-ever review of the state of nature on Earth and half of Australia's nationally threatened animal species occur in areas planned for urban development³, particularly greenfield development, which represents a current threat to Australia's biodiversity.

AILA's Action Plan

AILA has been active in providing leadership through design, strategy and the development of resources – but we acknowledge more can be done.

AILA commits to:

1. Continuing to play a crucial role in leading the profession to respond to this unfolding Emergency.
2. Continuing to lobby all levels of government to recognise the Emergency, allocate sufficient resources and advise on appropriate policy.
3. Promoting landscape architecture as a leading profession in policy development and actions to respond to the Emergency.
4. Lead collaboration with allied professions, the community and supporting organisations that have made climate change emergency declarations.
5. Engaging with our international colleagues to support the efforts of IFLA to advocate globally.
6. Lobbying for improved industry standards and practice.
7. Providing resources, education and information to members on how they can respond to the Emergency.
8. Calling on AILA's Corporate Partners to develop actions that respond to the Emergency.



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What we've done in the past

AILA has previously committed to supporting government and non-government agencies by providing leadership and advocacy through:

- Greener, More Liveable and Healthier Cities Platform
- Green Infrastructure Position Statement
- Adaption to the Changing Climate: Building Resilience Position Statement
- The Remaking Lost Connections Ideas Competition
- Cooling Cities Position Statement
- National Living Cities Workshop

AILA's position statements articulate and clarify AILA's position on a number of relevant and topical issues and have been developed to help communicate these to our members, government, the media and the public.

This declaration is just a start and we look forward to engaging with membership on what else we can do.

Australia's living infrastructure assets are key to tackling the major issues facing Australia's cities, towns and regions. AILA members and Registered Landscape Architects are equipped with the knowledge and skills to advise how Living Infrastructure can support governments at all levels with local communities to enhance our towns and cities to make them green, more liveable and healthier.

The role of landscape architects: responding together

AILA acknowledges that this issue requires a broad, coordinated and collective approach to action. While there is a specific role for landscape architects to play, there is also a great need for collaboration with government, the broader built environment and the community.

AILA members will be encouraged to work within their own organisation and practice to make similar declaration. The Action Plan AILA has developed can be adapted and contextualised to different types of practice (sole practitioner, academic, client side, government or private practice).

AILA encourages our membership to share ideas and thoughts on what else we can do in response to the Emergency. Feedback and ideas can be emailed directly to admin@aila.org.au.

Endnotes

1. "Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C", Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 8 October 2018, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/> (accessed 14 August 2019)
2. "Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented'; Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating,'" United Nations, 6 May 2019, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/> (accessed 14 August 2019)
3. "Cities are hotspots for threatened species," Ives, C. D. et al (2016), *Global Ecology and Biogeography*, 25: 117–126, doi.org./10.1111/geb.12404. (accessed 14 August 2019)