



**Australian Government**

**Australian National Botanic Gardens**

## **Media Release**

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### **Botanic Gardens unite to save Australia's plants**

The heads of Australia's major botanic gardens and herbaria are meeting in Canberra today to develop a strategy for action to save Australia's plant biodiversity from the impacts of climate change.

"This is cutting edge science with national and international implications," Director of the Australian National Botanic Gardens Anne Duncan said.

"Australia's botanic gardens will be the first in the world to develop a national approach to supporting species conservation in response to climate change.

"The first impacts of climate change can already be seen on some vulnerable plants and even if the world stopped emitting greenhouse gases today, there are further unavoidable effects on plants and their habitats."

As native habitats vanish, Australia's botanic gardens can offer future bio-insurance for the survival of Australian plants.

"This is not just an environmental problem," Ms Duncan said. "Plants are basic to human survival, for food, medicines, clean air and water, soil fertility and many other essential materials."

Botanic gardens around the country have the horticultural expertise to maintain a huge diversity of plants. As environments change faster than plants can adapt, iconic Aussie plants like some banksias could cease to exist in the wild. The important genetic information in cultivated populations of plants and in seed banks could support the future recovery of wild populations.

Botanic gardens also undertake the basic botanic and ecological research that is required to underpin the restoration of ecosystems in the wild.

Equally importantly, botanic gardens provide an untapped opportunity to deliver conservation messages nationwide to their 13 million annual visitors.

"We have to step up to the challenge now, at every level, if we are to make a difference," Ms Duncan said. "Unless we work together, the implications for Australia's unique environment are bound to be severe."

The strategy, to be developed, will provide a framework for action.

**Directors of Australia's botanic gardens and herbaria are available for interview.**

**Photo and film opportunities. Photos available upon request.**

Images of Australian National Botanic Gardens living collections and behind the scenes plant research nursery.

**More information:**

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