



FOREWORD

In Australia and around the world, biodiversity is under huge and growing pressure. The pressures are pervasive and chronic in many places — invasive species, habitat loss and climate change in particular.

But there's also good news. Every day we are making exciting new discoveries about the breadth and depth of Australia's biodiversity. Since the first edition of the *Numbers of Living Species in Australia and the World* was produced in 2006, we've discovered 48 reptiles, about 200 new fish species and 1,184 flowering plants.

Understanding of the global significance of Australia's biodiversity is also on the increase. This comprehensive review of the endemism of Australia's plants and animals shows that a greater percentage of our plants and animals are found nowhere else in the world. Reptile endemism has jumped from 89 to 93 per cent, mammals from 83 to 87 and frogs from 93 to 94. And close to 92 per cent of our vascular plants, up from 90 per cent, are unique to Australia. It is vital that we forge new and innovative ways of conserving and protecting this unique biodiversity at a landscape level.

Harnessing core science and knowledge bases, like this report, will be key to creating new ways of meeting Australia's biodiversity challenges. Importantly, they provide a benchmark for assessing and monitoring the future effects of climate change on Australia's biodiversity.

As we move into the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010, Australia has the opportunity to show global leadership in biodiversity conservation. This report, the only one of its kind in the world, is a positive start.



Robyn Kruk
Secretary
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
September 2009