



MEDIA RELEASE

SENATOR KIM CARR

Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research

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OPENING OUR EYES TO AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL HERITAGE

Australians will be able to help researchers protect the amazing array of plants and animals in their local area, thanks to a new online information portal.

The Atlas of Living Australia has been developed to build a better picture of the Australian biosphere. It already holds over 23 million records on the distribution of Australia's fauna and flora, in addition to maps, images and literature. Members of the public can help to build the database by contributing local photographs and information.

Innovation Minister Senator Kim Carr encouraged schools, communities and researchers to become involved.

"With this tool, we can create species distribution models, predict areas that could be suitable for a species, or work out how a species will be affected by a change in climate. I am proud to see Australians working together to protect our natural heritage," Senator Carr said.

The Atlas project is a national scientific collaboration between the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Australian natural history collections community and the Australian Government.

CSIRO Chief Executive Dr Megan Clark said community involvement was central to the success of the Atlas project.

"With the support of the public, we expect to incorporate even more data sets, tools and services over the next eighteen months," Dr Clark added.

Mr Donald Hobern, Director of the Atlas, said the project built on existing tools such as the Australian Plant Name Index, the Australian Faunal Directory, the Virtual Herbarium and the Online Zoological Collections of Australian Museums.

"The Government's investment in this project has enabled us to make rapid progress in integrating these rich data sources," he said.

To try out the Atlas tools and services, see <http://www.ala.org.au>

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