



Andrew Wilkie MP
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Emailed to epbcreview@environment.gov.au

Professor Graeme Samuel AC
EPBC Act Review Secretariat
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Dear Professor Samuel

The Federal Government needs to act immediately to strengthen national environmental laws and stop the fast-paced environmental destruction occurring in Australia. This review is an opportune time to do so.

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act must incorporate an overarching principle of protection for Australia's environment and biodiversity as the primary principle in all decision making processes under the Act. This principle should be the fundamental consideration and stand outside the cost-benefit analysis, with all other factors taken into account as secondary considerations.

Ministerial discretion must be removed and replaced with independent and transparent decision-making processes which include strong public participation and community engagement. This requires clearer criteria for decision-making including established thresholds for when applications must be refused on environmental grounds. The tradition of fast-tracked handshake deals behind closed doors between politicians and developers must end. Strategic environmental assessment processes must also be strengthened including consideration of cumulative effects.

We need a national, independent Environmental Commission that sets clear standards for regulation of the environment and makes decisions in a transparent manner. The new Commission would be tasked with coordinating local, state and federal governments to develop and implement national standards and regulation

on air and water pollution, waste management, deforestation and climate change. We also need public and measurable recovery plans for threatened, endangered and critically endangered species and ecosystems. As well as assessing projects independently, the Environmental Commission would provide independent national oversight and enforcement of regulations. The Commission would ensure compliance and strongly enforce the law without political interference.

Australians should have access to transparent, up-to-date information about environmental approvals and actions across the country. There must be a publicly accessible register of information that includes conditions for approvals, any offset locations, and compliance and monitoring data. Community legal rights to allow both judicial and merits review through open standing should be guaranteed.

Amendments to the Act should also incorporate greater emphasis on Indigenous community leadership, land management techniques and stewardship principles.

It's absurd that climate change and land clearing are not considered matters of national environmental significance and this must be rectified as a priority. Projects which significantly affect water resources should also require independent assessment at the federal level. Further, the process for approving and monitoring environmental offsets needs to be reviewed and strengthened measurably.

The Australian environment is facing unprecedented threats from climate change, pollution, deforestation and biodiversity loss. It is imperative that we act now to protect our unique environment.

Yours sincerely



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