

Parliamentary Paper  
No. 253/1980

The Parliament of the  
Commonwealth of Australia

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ENVIRONMENT AND  
CONSERVATION

Report

Being a report that the Committee  
has been unable to complete its  
inquiries

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ISBN 0 642 05918 7

## **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

*Chairman:* Mr J. C. Hodges, M.P.  
*Deputy Chairman:* Dr H. A. Jenkins, M.P.  
*Members:* Mr M. Baillieu, M.P.  
Mr B. Cohen, M.P.  
Mr J. F. Cotter, M.P.  
Mr P. S. Fisher, M.P.  
Mr B. L. Howe, M.P.  
Mr B. D. Simon, M.P.  
*Clerk to the Committee:* Mr J. R. Cummins

## **MEMBERS OF HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS SUBCOMMITTEE**

*Chairman:* Mr J. C. Hodges, M.P.  
*Members:* Mr M. Baillieu, M.P.  
Mr J. F. Cotter, M.P.  
Mr B. L. Howe, M.P.  
Dr H. A. Jenkins, M.P.  
*Clerk to the Subcommittee:* Mr A. J. Kelly

# PROCESSES OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1. The environment is a complex system of interacting components.

2. These components include the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere.

3. The atmosphere is the layer of gases surrounding the Earth.

4. The hydrosphere is the total amount of water on the Earth's surface.

5. The lithosphere is the rigid upper part of the Earth's crust.

6. The biosphere is the global sum of all ecosystems.

7. These spheres interact and influence each other.

8. The environment is constantly changing.

9. Human activities have a significant impact on the environment.

10. Understanding environmental processes is essential for sustainable development.

11. Environmental science studies the interactions between the environment and human society.

12. Environmental protection is a global challenge.

13. We must take action to preserve our planet for future generations.

14. Environmental education is key to raising awareness.

15. Together, we can create a sustainable future.

16. The environment is our home, and we must protect it.

17. Environmental science provides the knowledge we need.

18. Let's work together to make a difference.

19. The future is in our hands.

20. Environmental science is the path forward.

21. Let's embrace the challenges of the future.

22. Environmental science is the key to a better world.

23. Let's protect our planet and ourselves.

24. Environmental science is the future.

## REPORT ON UNFINISHED INQUIRIES

### Environmental Protection Inquiry

On 8 June 1978 the Committee resolved to inquire into and report upon 'the adequacy of legislative and administrative arrangements relating to environmental protection and resource management'.

2. Submissions were invited from persons and organisations with an interest in the inquiry and the terms of reference were advertised in newspapers throughout Australia in 1978. During the inquiry the Committee took nearly 1700 pages of evidence. Final public hearings were held on 26 August 1980.

3. The Committee tabled its first report on this reference on 18 October 1979. The first report dealt with the operations of the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974* and the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*. The Committee's final report on this reference is in the process of being drafted. It will deal with the operations of the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975* and the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

### Hazardous Chemicals inquiry

4. On 21 February 1980 the Committee resolved to inquire into and report upon 'the management of chemicals potentially hazardous to health and the environment'.

5. In response to nation-wide advertising 100 submissions have been received to date from Commonwealth departments, State Governments, industry, unions, environmental groups and private citizens. Further submissions are expected. It has been a feature of this inquiry that submissions have in their nature taken a long time to prepare.

6. The Subcommittee has held two public hearings in Canberra and one in Melbourne. Over 500 pages of evidence have been taken from seven witnesses. A great deal more evidence will need to be taken and inspections made to complete the inquiry.

7. The Committee has considered the role of the National Advisory Committee on Chemicals (NACC) which has been established to (a) assess the environmental effects of potentially hazardous chemicals; and (b) recommend appropriate controls to Federal and State authorities. The NACC is about to commence its assessment function but appears to have inadequate staff resources to undertake the task.

### Recommendations

8. The Committee's final report on its inquiry into Environmental Protection would have completed its review of Commonwealth legislation relating to conservation and the environment.

9. Although the Committee's inquiry into Hazardous Chemicals is at an early stage, the evidence taken to date and the submissions received justify a continuation of the inquiry.

10. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that:

- (a) the Committee be re-established in the new Parliament with Terms of Reference similar to those of the Committee appointed during the Thirty-first Parliament;
- (b) the Committee established in the new Parliament resume the Inquiries into Environmental Protection and Hazardous Chemicals; and

*(c) the Committee established in the new Parliament have the power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation appointed during the Thirty-first Parliament.*

**J. C. HODGES**  
*Chairman*

September 1980