

Dear Senators,

I have only recently learned of the proposed amendments to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, and of the very limited period permitted for public submissions. As an active bushcarer and participant in efforts to protect our wildlife, in particular the grey-headed flying-fox and other bats, I hasten to express my dismay at these proposals which, I understand, were formulated without public consultation.

There is no question that Australia's environment has suffered, and continues to suffer enormous damage from inadequately controlled and ill-conceived development in spite of earlier legislation. In common with many of my acquaintances and colleagues, it is not at all apparent to me how the proposed amendments would provide any significant enhancement of the measures already available under the Act for controlling development, which is one of its major objectives.

On the contrary, the proposed amendments are understood to be designed (perhaps among other objectives) to reduce processing time and costs for developers, and to achieve this by permitting safeguards to be overridden arbitrarily by the Minister. My attitude is that if, as a consequence of procedures deemed necessary to protect the environment, prospective developers incur delays and costs greater than they would wish, then so be it. The consequences must be borne by the ultimate beneficiaries. Such delays and costs are significant only by contrast with previous, laissez-faire conditions in which controls were virtually non-existent and sensitive ecological locations could be ravaged at will.

Perhaps the EPBC Act might benefit from some amendments, but those now proposed are not among them. I respectfully call upon the Committee to reject them in their entirety.

Yours faithfully,
Ken Holland.