



21 May 2015

Submission to the Inquiry into the administration and transparency of the Register of Environmental Organisations and its effectiveness in supporting communities to take practical action to improve the environment

This submission is on behalf of Markets For Change Ltd.

Markets For Change is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the natural environment, specifically through (i) providing information and education to the Australian and international community about ethical and sustainable uses of natural resources, and (ii) building capacity and skills in the community relevant to protection, preservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

We have 53 members, and a supporter base of approximately 20,000 people. Our company is registered as a not-for-profit in the ACT.

Our focus to date has been on forests. We investigate the impacts of production on natural values, how public and private policy settings contribute to environmental outcomes, and the role of procurement policy, certification systems, alternative products, and consumer demand in ensuring good environmental outcomes.

We provide practical opportunities for individuals, organisations and businesses to make a difference to what is occurring on the ground by informing them about purchasing choices that are ethical, sustainable and have low environmental impacts. We are responding to a desire in our community to avoid doing harm.

If one believes that minimising environmental impacts is important, then the environment needs a voice. There is important work to be done in presenting public interest issues in comparison to private commercial interest.

Giving support to environment groups via tax deductibility for donations, which encourages giving, goes some way towards addressing the imbalance of resources available to make the public interest case.

Regarding the extent to which activities involve on ground environmental works, everything we advocate for has an on ground effect. There are two ways of achieving an on ground effect: go out and do that work oneself, or persuade someone else to do something about it.

The first option is very important, however the second is equally so and can often be cost effective. It would be illogical to always await environmental damage and the resources to physically remediate it before taking action.

Our approach is to persuade landholders and those undertaking activities on the ground to be more mindful of their environmental impact. There are a number of ways in which the wider community can tell landholders of their aspirations and assist landholders to

improve on ground performance or initiate on ground works. Our role in talking with markets is a cost effective way of facilitating consumer sentiment being reflected in better environmental performance on the ground.

Markets For Change was placed on the Register of Environmental Organisations during the 2013-2014 financial year, and raised approximately \$17,500 in tax deductible donations.

We report to our donors in our regular email updates to members and supporters, and make our audited financial reports available.

We would be very concerned if the Committee proposes onerous new conditions for administration and compliance, or constraining our ability to inform the community and businesses about the environmental impacts of current practices, the ethical and sustainable uses of natural resources, and to inform them of the role they can play in protection, preservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

Our Chief Executive is available to give evidence in person to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Peg Putt
Chief Executive Officer
Markets For Change