

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
environment.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Re: Register of Environmental Organisations

Thank you for allowing me the chance to lodge a submission to the federal inquiry regarding the Register of Environmental Organisations.

I would like to make comment about term of reference - *activities undertaken by organisations currently listed on the Register and the extent to which these activities involve on-ground environmental works.*

I would like to refer to section 2.1 (b) from the Guidelines for the Register of the Environmental Organisations. http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/pages/53ca6702-48ad-414a-bf24-60e253d5ad0d/files/reo-guide-2003_0.pdf

2.1 Principal Purpose must be the Protection of the Natural Environment

(b) **the provision of information or education**, or the carrying on of research, about the natural environment or a significant aspect of the natural environment.”

I personally believe that the information that is to be provided should be kept up-to-date at all times. I would like to use the Abbot Point expansion as an example. There is a huge amount of misinformation on the internet about this particular project.

It is mentioned on numerous websites run by registered environmental organisations. One of the main sites is the “Fight for the Reef” campaign which is run by campaign partners WWF & AMCS.

The Abbot Point project has seen many changes in the past few years but the above site has not been kept up-to-date. I find that a lot of the information on there is very misleading. Some sections have been kept up dated and others have not been. To someone that has not been keeping abreast of this topic, if you didn’t look at all the sections on the site then you could be easily misled into believing what is actually happening at Abbot Point.

I certainly don’t believe that asking for donations “**to join the Reef legal fighting team**” is doing on-ground environmental work. Directly from their donation page: “Top of our list is a legal challenge to stop the Abbot Point dredging and dumping going ahead. An act of global environmental vandalism like this should not be legal - help us take on the fight to show that it isn't.” Above this they are still referring to the original permit to allow “sea dumping” of 3 million cubic metres of capital dredge spoil. This permit is no longer valid so therefore it looks like they are trying to gain donations under false pretenses. Although, they do go on to say “Any extra funds beyond legal costs will go into further campaigning in defence of the Reef.” Is campaigning classed as on-ground environmental work?

It is great to see that these groups would like to protect the reef but I would just like to see them do it by using honesty and integrity, not by deceiving people with misleading information.

Other businesses can be fined for false advertising so I do not believe that environmental groups should be exempt from these same rules.

Yours sincerely,