

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
ec.sen@aph.gov.au

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Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Standing) Bill 2015

I care very much about the environment and I understand that the proposed Bill will repeal Section 487 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999. Section 487 currently extends standing to seek judicial review of decisions to certain individuals, organisations and associations.

I believe that Section 487 of the EPBC Act is a very important part of the Act and increases rigour in the approvals process for projects which impact on Matters of National Environmental Significance.

By definition, the federal law is meant to protect our most nationally and globally important natural assets and prevent developments which would impact these.

Matters of National Environmental Significance include World Heritage Areas, the Great Barrier Reef and threatened species and ecological communities. As a concerned citizen I believe that all Australians should continue to have the right to seek remedy under s487 if there is a legitimate concern that a decision on a development would impact on these assets.

As stated by the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption in their review of the NSW Planning system:

“Merit appeals provide a safeguard against biased decision-making by consent authorities and enhance the accountability of these authorities. The extension of third party merit appeals acts as a disincentive for corrupt decision-making by consent authorities.”

I encourage the Senate Standing Committee on Environment to reject the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Standing) Bill 2015.

Yours sincerely

Julie McLeish