



Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

September 1 2015

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

Environment Victoria (EV) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Standing) Bill 2015.

Environment Victoria is one of Australia's leading independent environment groups. With over 40 member groups and tens of thousands of individual supporters, we have been representing Victorian communities on environmental matters for over 40 years.

Environment Victoria strongly opposes any moves to remove the long-standing right of individuals or groups to challenge environmental approvals under EPBC legislation on the basis that they are either not directly affected by it or do not have a special interest in the outcome.

Removing the standing of community-based environmental organisations such as EV will effectively preclude them from acting on behalf of concerned community members and supporters on environmental matters that they care strongly about. It would remove a key function of public scrutiny of projects affecting matters of national environmental significance, and prevents environmental organisations providing an important role as environmental watchdogs in public interest environmental matters.

Such a move would essentially take Australia's national environmental legislation back to the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974. This predecessor to the EPBC Act minimised judicial review by environmental organisations. This is neither progressive nor representative of public opinion on how matters of national environmental significance should be considered under national law in 2015.

Australians, and Victorians in particular have a long history of challenging projects that they deem to be damaging to the natural environment they love.

One could argue that protecting Australia's unique and rich natural landscape is part of the Australian psyche. The motivation to remove such an integral component of Australian history is deeply inappropriate and should be rejected outright.

Any future changes to Australia's national environmental legislation should be focussed on strengthening legal protection for matters of national environmental significance rather than attempting to weaken them. Measures to strengthen national environmental laws should include the national and global impacts of proposed fossil fuel projects and include approval triggers relating to carbon emissions, the protection of forests and national parks, with particular focus on climate change.





A progressive approach to strengthening national environmental laws would appropriately reflect the values most Australians attribute to matters of national environmental significance in 2015, rather than taking Australia back to 1974.

Yours sincerely

Nick Roberts
Campaigns Director, Environment Victoria

