

The Secretary
Senate Environment and Communications Committee
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my concern about the possibility of the federal government handing over the protection of Australia's environment and threatened species to state governments. I can understand the pressure from businesses and developers. However, I think it would be a very serious mistake with seriously damaging outcomes. In my opinion, since Tony Burke took over his portfolio, he has acted courageously and with intelligence, and has done as much as possible under the circumstances to protect the environment. From all the evidence I have seen, the states have an appalling record in this area.

I am particularly aware of the abysmal behaviour of the Baillieu government in my state. Here are just a few examples:

- Ignoring the scientific evidence of the damage caused by cattle grazing in the high country of Victoria, and bowing to pressure from the cattlemen's lobby group.
- Planning to allow numerous environmentally damaging activities in National Parks.
- Permitting continuing logging of old growth forests in the one of Victoria's catchment areas near Toolangi in the Central Highlands. This is an absolute disgrace and has recently destroyed the site of a colony of Leadbeater's possums, despite prior warnings from research scientist Dr David Lindenmayer who has been monitoring them for over 30 years. The prevailing attitude is summed up by a sign on the stump of the tree that read '*this is where your possum boxes used to be*'. The combination of recent bush fires and ongoing logging such as this is causing these animals to be facing extinction - and this is our State emblem! Victoria's native forests and threatened species are being totally decimated under our current State governance. Without strong legislated protection of their habitat, the existence of these and other indigenous species will be unsustainable

The clearing of native forests is for the manufacture of paper, such as Reflex, which could so easily be made from plantation timber. The manufacturer of this paper, The Australian Paper Company, continues to be permitted to use old growth timber despite promises that it will change to a more sustainable supply. Most of the remaining timber is sent overseas as wood chips where it is made into goods which Australia purchases back at a vastly inflated price.

It has recently come to my knowledge that large old growth trees have potentially very high monetary value as a carbon sink if left in place, even if burnt - a value far greater for the Australian economy than the value of wood chips, yet, as far as I know, the state government is not taking any action to even look into this possibility.

The Victorian government has an appalling track record when it comes to protecting our precious endangered species and their habitat. It cannot be trusted to maintain or improve our biodiversity, or exercise appropriate custodianship of the land and its fauna and flora. I do not believe they have any understanding of ecology - of the interrelatedness of all aspects of the environment. Other states are also hell bent on development at the expense of the natural environment. There is so much to be done to repair the damage that has already occurred, let

alone failure to safeguard against further destruction. Furthermore, State governments have different approaches to the environment, and in many instances, issues cross state borders as we have seen in the Murray Darling catchment, leading to ongoing conflicts, stalemates and compromise.

Australia needs strong fearless leadership, and legislation to protect our fragile land. Based on the evidence, I firmly believe this can only come from control by the Federal Government because it is able to see the big picture, go beyond short term solutions and legislate for the whole of Australia.

If the present Victorian Baillieu Government is allowed to control this situation we will end up with logging leases that are 20 years in length not the present 5 year terms which at least allow for a change of policy after a reasonably short period if, through education, public opinion demands a change in policy.

I believe this matter is extremely serious. Please keep protection of the environment and endangered species in the capable hands of the federal government.

Yours Sincerely,

Anne Kotzman