

Tuesday 17 November 2020

Dear Committee Secretary,

I wish to make a submission about the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Bill on behalf of Transition Wyndham, a community group, part of a world-wide movement that supports transition to a more sustainable future.

Recent years have been devastating on our natural environment, from destructive logging of native forests, to loss of biodiversity, water insecurity, First Nations people devastated by destruction of sacred places and sacred sites and an ongoing war on waste and plastic pollution.

The bushfire season of 2019-20 in Australia wiped out billions of animals and plants. But even before the fires, Australia was in an extinction crisis.

Australia has lost many animals and plants and more are becoming endangered.

Environmental concerns have become existential in nature. We've had years of droughts, then floods. Extreme weather events are definitely becoming more extreme and last year was the hottest on record.

Our natural environment is essential if we are to maintain a liveable continent. The environment is foundational to absolutely everything else. If we destroy the environment, we have no fall back. Air and water and livable temperatures are essential for life.

I believe that allowing only two weeks for public comment means this process is a fiasco.

Very importantly, the government should release the Final Report of the EPBC review months before further discussion is undertaken. The public needs time to scrutinise it.

The full set of reforms needs to be considered together.

I urge the government to bring these reforms, including an independent, nonpartisan and non-industry conflicted regulator, who can enforce strong National Environmental Standards forward so that the governments of all levels can be held accountable and transparent in their decision making - always putting the public, environmental and national interests ahead of corporate interests.

The regulator must have no ties to the fossil fuel industries, no ties to extractive industries and not be associated to any large industry.

Good legislation requires all the facts. I urge that:

- All discussion about this act be delayed until after the release and scrutiny of the final report of the Samuel Review
- The final report of the Samuel Review of the EPBC Act be released and considered
- The independent regulator and robust environmental standards be legislated and the regulator appointed prior to handing responsibility to the states
- New national environmental standards be made available for public scrutiny at least two months prior to parliamentary debate.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lisa Field
Facilitator, Transition Wyndham