

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

Dear Committee Secretary,

I ask that you table my submission as follows:

I understand that the proposed Bill will, by repealing section 487 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999, remove the right of certain individuals, organisations and associations to seek judicial review of decisions to allow projects or operations which may damage Australia's environment.

The proposed bill is a direct threat to Australia's democracy, because it will prevent citizens from protecting our national heritage from vested interests, who may betray Australia's national interest.

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 an Australian citizen who values our environment, including the health of our farmland, groundwater, rivers, oceans and forests, I believe 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.

Section 487 reduces the likelihood of corruption, by holding projects to public account. The main opponents of section 487 are coal interests, who would have Australia ignore the looming threat of climate change, and would also like to see Australia's mining industry unaccountable to the Australian public.

As stated by the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption stated 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 ask that you do not allow the proposed amendment, but expand the right of Australians to protect our national interest against those who would gain from our national loss of environment or amenity.