



Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
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Canberra, ACT 2601

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Dear Sir/Madam

**RE:Comments on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation  
Amendment (Retaining Federal Approval Powers) Bill 2012**

I have been directed by the State Council of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) to forward a submission for consideration with regard to the above Bill.

Wildlife Queensland is one of the most respected wildlife-focused conservation groups in Queensland. With over 5000 supporters spread across numerous branches throughout Queensland, Wildlife Queensland is a strong voice for our wildlife and its habitat.

Wildlife Queensland is apolitical. Our aims include;

- **Preserve** the flora and fauna of Australia by all lawful means
- **Educate** the community in an understanding of the principles of conservation and preservation of the natural environment
- **Discourage** by all legal means, the possible destruction, exploitation and unnecessary development of any part of the natural environment.
- **Encourage** rational land use and proper land planning of existing and future development, and the use of the natural environment and its management.

Wildlife Queensland welcomes the opportunity to make comment. Wildlife Queensland appreciates the necessity to achieve a balance between conservation and preservation of our biodiversity and provision for ecological sustainable industries and recreational opportunities. However it is well recognised that this balance is not being achieved and it is well established that our biodiversity is in decline.

Wildlife Queensland has perused the Bill and the explanatory notes. Wildlife Queensland cannot emphasise strongly enough our support for the amendments to the EPBC Act. As indicated biodiversity is in decline and in spite of the 1996 National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity and the more recent Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030 several species continue to be lost and the conservation status of many species to decline with the resultant adverse impact for the environment. There is a crisis and this needs not only to be recognised but addressed. This Bill is but a small but essential step in attempting to ensure minimum adverse impact to our environment and its biodiversity.

Species comprising our biodiversity have their own range and distribution and these do not necessarily align with State or Territory borders. Furthermore there are species and special places such as the Great Barrier Reef, World Heritage Listed Properties, old growth forests and the list goes on of national environmental significance. The Commonwealth Government has an obligation

## **Wildlife Queensland: Support for the EPBC Amendment Bill 2012.**

to ensure protection not only at a national level but at an international level. Such obligations are legally cemented in a range of treaties, protocols and agreements. It can readily be seen what an adverse outcome may result even with the existing legislation in place by considering the fact that there is a possibility of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Listed Property being listed as 'a park in danger'.

If matters of environmental significance are likely to be impacted through development there must be a second independent opinion as to whether or not such developments should proceed..

A brief review of history will clearly demonstrate the pivotal role the Commonwealth Government through their powers under the EPBC Act has played in protecting matters of environmental significance and particular species. At times this is done by rejecting the proposed development such as in the case of the Traveston Dam. In other cases, the Commonwealth further conditions approvals given too freely by States for development that will boost the economy at the uncoded expense to the environment the folly of which will be borne not by our generation or perhaps even our children's generation but by future generations as the planet's environment continues to deteriorate. Such examples include the proposed wind farm at Mt Emerald, North Queensland and a range of Coal Seam Gas developments in western Queensland. It must be stated that Wildlife Queensland is opposed to the Coal Seam Gas developments but concedes that Commonwealth intervention through conditions imposed has minimised the adverse environmental factors at least to some degree. The Commonwealth Government has been forced to step in and afford protection even to the iconic koala in Queensland and New South Wales.

It cannot be emphasised strongly enough the significance that the review by the Commonwealth of State approvals for particular developments currently plays in protecting our environment and its biodiversity. In fact Wildlife Queensland would welcome further intervention in the protection of our unique wildlife and our special places but appreciates that such requests are outside of the scope of the Committee.

This independent review triggered under the EPBC Act is particularly necessary in Queensland where there is no upper house of review. Furthermore it is needed in Queensland where unfortunately the current Government shows little care for the environment, appears to possess a clear lack of understanding for the need for a healthy environment and is certainly taking no steps to arrest the decline in biodiversity. The only steps being taken are to expedite development approvals and weaken environmental laws.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Wildlife Queensland is of the opinion the current approach could be improved by strengthening the Commonwealth powers under the EPBC Act. However any weakening of the present situation, in particular devolving powers to the States and Territories through bilateral agreements would be an utter disaster for the environment and its biodiversity. The Commonwealth Government has an obligation to afford protection to our biodiversity not only for its inherent right but for the enjoyment of today's generation and the future generations. This will not be achieved by handing the responsibility for approving proposed actions that significantly impact on matters protected under the EPBC Act to a State or Territory. Wildlife Queensland urges support for the Bill.

Yours faithfully

Des Boyland, Policies and Campaigns Manager

17<sup>th</sup> January 2013.