



Submission

In response to

Senate Inquiry on the Streamlining of the EPBC Act

Prepared by

Bush Heritage Australia

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For further information on this submission, please contact

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Bush Heritage owns 1.2 million Ha and works with partners to manage over 11 million Ha of land for conservation and cultural outcomes. We work constructively with all relevant State and Territory governments, but we have seen the potential for perverse outcomes when a single jurisdiction has full power over approvals of this kind. We are also concerned about the lack of standards, solid solutions for implementation gaps and an independent commissioner.

As Professor Samuel has found, the EPBC Act is a complex piece of legislation and the interaction of the Act with State and Territory legislation, policies and processes will require careful consideration and planning. As such, Bush Heritage Australia strongly urges the government to wait for the final report. **As such, we do not support the current rushed legislative reform that is being pushed through. The establishment of the committee to have hearings and report in only two weeks also does not enable proper scrutiny or accountability. This simply does not allow for genuine public consultation.**

Specifically, we would support legislative changes that accomplish the following improvements:

- Establishment of an independent regulator and strong national environmental standards, put together as a package that allows sufficient time for public scrutiny prior to being put forward to Parliament;
- Rigorous national standards with accompanying measures that are consistent and available for public use (now recommended by the Craik and Samuel interim reports);
- A strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Consideration of climate change and additive threats to nature; and
- Strong tools for implementation of the legislative and regulatory framework.

Any amendments to this crucial Act must consider the Samuel Report in its entirety, once completed. We again ask the leaders of our country to withdraw support from any hastily constructed change and work with the Australian Government through a comprehensive joint process involving all impacted Governments, and sufficient public consultation, once the final report has been handed down. We feel this is required to realise the investment Australian tax payers have made in the development of the report itself and to deliver a well-considered and a nationally coordinated plan to protect and restore the environment and deliver efficiency outcomes for business and communities.