

## **Submission**

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment. (Retaining Federal Approval Powers ) Bill 2012.

Committee Secretary.

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications.

PO Box 6100

Parliament House.

Canberra ACT 2600

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

Dear Committee Secretary,

### **The need for retaining Federal Powers.**

It is of the upmost importance for the Federal Government to maintain the federal approval powers as areas of international significance need to be safeguarded for future Australians and also for the world.

As we have seen recently with the various State Governments across the country, they seem too far removed from the importance of our natural environment to the community and the world as a whole. Only interested in finding ways to open up these unique areas for short term economic gain. Whilst not considering the long term economic and environmental value to the community and the world at large.

Tourism bodies are spending millions encouraging people from around the world to visit our natural environment. Some recent examples reported in the media of Cinema ads in China encouraging their people to travel here to see our unique unspoilt natural environment.

The Federal Government has a responsibility to keep and maintain the value of our wild natural World Heritage areas and not to hand over control to reckless State Governments who have indicated they want to open these areas up to grazing, horse riding, motor trail bikes, hunting and now even logging and next will be mining. These actions will cause huge amounts of environmental degradation from the introduction of weeds, erosion and pollution and will cost many millions to repair if at all possible.

Timber industry players are putting huge pressures on State Governments to open various national parks to logging. The industry is seeking an extra million hectares of trees including hard won icon National Parks in northern NSW. The industry is also seeking a relaxation of environmental controls around logging in creek beds and other sensitive areas. As reported in the Weekend Australian December 1-2, 2012 by Graham Lloyd titled "Combatants line up for new forest wars." This is on the back of the timber industry having received huge amounts of State and Federal funds in

compensation for timber companies to exit the industry during the regional forest agreements (RFA) process.

This one of many very important good example mentioned above where the Federal Government must not hand the Federal Environmental powers over to the States, if the Federal Government does, we may see world famous much loved World Heritage National Parks logged, under the sexy new term “ecological thinning” that has recently been flagged .

The majority of our World Heritage National Parks provide major economic long- term values to their local community from tourism and also to fresh water catchments protection and with their rich biodiversity. Some good examples of these values are well known parks in NSW and QLD, Barrington Tops NP, Blue Mountains NP, Wollemi NP, Dorrigo NP, New England and Washpool, Border Ranges, Nightcap NP and Lamington NP.

In a recent article in the Australian by the Hon Craig Emerson Minister for Trade. The weekend Australian November 10-11, 2012 “Tyranny of distance becomes power to proximity.” He noted the value of our natural environment for the Asian tourist market. Quote “A second endowment is our natural attractions: reefs, rainforests, harbours, national parks and wilderness areas. Asia`s middle classes are on the move well-heeled tourist looking for high-quality experiences.

One would have to ask what message we will be sending to the huge Asian tourist market if we start logging our unique national parks. This action would put our international tourism industry at risk.

Australia`s natural wild areas are just too valuable to the international community and the local community, as a whole from the protection they provide for carbon storage to water catchments for our water needs to their rich biodiversity, endangered flora and fauna, a good example now is the” koala” to rare geological formations. To have those powers that protect these special natural areas transferred over to the States, is just to have their values undermined.

Already the department of the Environment and Heritage in NSW has received major management funding cuts that have been reported in the media, this comes at a time when Rangers within the department have now been asked to help supervise recreational hunters.

This along with the other issues mentioned is why the Federal Government must retain their environmental powers as the States at present just seem too irresponsible not to mention the issues surrounding coal seam gas mining in water catchment areas. There are now strong arguments for the Federal Government to have even more powers not less.

Timothy Bidder