

I am Deidre Shaw and I live in Canberra. I am a keen bushwalker, frequent visitor to Kosciuszko National Park and Namadgi National Park and because I have a small camper van, I also like to travel more broadly around Australia, particularly to National Parks and Nature Reserves. I am also a member of the NPA of ACT and Reclaim Kosci.

I have observed over recent years there seems to be an increasing eagerness by governments of all persuasions to view the national estate as a means of filling the coffers by way of providing commercial deals for accommodation and encouraging recreational pursuits such as mountain bike riding and horse riding within National Parks, to the point where now special facilities and infrastructure are being provided for them within National Parks. I am very concerned that this is in direct contravention of the objectives for which National Parks were established: the protection of flora and fauna and the unspoiled natural landscapes associated with them - not as commercial opportunities.

We constantly hear on the news about deforestation which is impacting the koala population as land is cleared both for housing and agriculture. This is a practice which must stop as the koala is an iconic, unique Australian animal and must be protected at all costs. This means putting a stop to wanton clearing of koala habitat. Indeed, if we are serious about preserving our koalas, replanting of suitable trees would be highly desirable.

The platypus faces problems of its own. Due to pollution from farm and agricultural runoff, the very water where the platypus lives is now no longer pure and their numbers are decreasing.

I would like to see Professor Samuel's report implemented in full without the government deciding which bits to adopt and leaving out those sections which are inconvenient or politically unacceptable. As Australia has a disastrous record of extinction of both flora and fauna, timely adoption of all Professor Samuel's recommendations would be a big step in the right direction.

Clear requirements around the quality, consistency and comprehensive application of standards as detailed in the National Environmental Standards is necessary as is the need to strongly enforce them. This cannot be done arbitrarily, but must be part of a far reaching system encompassing all states and territories, administered uniformly by the Commonwealth. These processes must include clearly defined outcomes with a two yearly review with an obligation upon either the responsible Minister or parliament to update standards in a timely manner based upon these findings.

.In order for this process to be effective, it must include community and indigenous participation and engagement at all levels.

There should be no provision for ministerial exemptions. All applications should be subject to close scrutiny according to the guidelines laid down.

I would wholeheartedly support the appointment of an independent, non-political National Environmental Assurance Commissioner. The Commission should be an independent statutory body with its own adequately funded independent staff and resources. The Commission should be able to audit both systems and projects without limitations. A compliance and enforcement standard must be in force before any accreditation of federal, state or territory processes takes place.

If Australia's iconic places such as the Great Barrier Reef, Blue Mountains and Kakadu as well as its unique animals such as the platypus and koala are to be protected, an Independent Office of Compliance and Enforcement must be established and funded by the government without delay.

Yours sincerely,
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