

10th November 2025

Midwest Carbon Zero: Submission opposing Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025

Our organisation, Midwest Carbon Zero, is based in Geraldton Western Australia. We have been advocating for climate action since 2019. As a coastal community that has had direct experience with climate change courtesy of cyclone Seroja in 2021 as well as current and future threats from coastal erosion and inundation. We are motivated to act. We want to ensure local and federal leaders consider the impact of global warming from ever increasing carbon emissions and course correct as a matter of urgency. Our fear is that the Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025 will activate ever more fossil fuel projects through the proposed alterations to the assessment pathways.

When the Albanese government won the last election, we held high hope that there would be an improved commitment to protecting our climate, land, water and biodiversity. Along with the approval of 31 fossil fuel projects this new Environment Protection Reform Bill looks to deliver great rewards to corporations and deny our children and future generations a stable climate.

We call on the Australian Parliament to reject the Albanese government's new laws and all the many components of them which will take us backwards, including:

The "streamlined" process that will cut out local communities, Traditional Owners and the public from having a say in decisions on coal and gas, renewables and minerals projects;

- Handing decisions of national significance, including impacts on our water, to state and territory governments, who have shown they can't be trusted;
- Creating sweeping new corruption risks by giving the Minister unprecedented power to decide how and when the law is actually applied (known as 'rulings');
- Entrenching a broad "national interest" loophole which can be used to approve almost any development regardless of environmental impacts;
- Creating a new 'pay to destroy' offset scheme that would allow developers to pay money into a fund in return for obtaining approval;
- Allowing the Minister to make a decision to switch off important safeguards for offshore gas projects, impacting First Nations consultation and environmental assessment.

Only when these backward steps have been fixed, will there be an opening to then take the reforms forward for the benefit of all Australians, such as by:

Ensuring that Aboriginal cultural values are a key part of all assessments and requiring Free, Prior and Informed Consent from Traditional Owners on project decisions;

- Better protecting water catchments, groundwater, forests and wildlife habitat;
- Ensuring all polluting activities are subject to stringent assessments of full climate impacts;

- Giving all communities the right to challenge decisions on their merits.

For our organisation, we are deeply concerned that many proposed local offshore and onshore gas projects, approved seismic testing, could be rushed ahead due to the proposed reforms. We urge the Australian Parliament to uphold their responsibility to protect, safeguard and act on ensuring our environment, the habitat of non-human life and the future security of all is met. Do not accept Murray Watt's *Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025* as it will dilute mechanisms of Environment Protection to streamline ventures that jeopardise our last hopes of a stable climate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Midwest Carbon Zero