

Committee Secretary
Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc (WBEC) <https://wbec.wordpress.com/> thanks you for this opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Save the Koala) Bill 2021.

WBEC's submission is as follows:

1. WBEC is deeply concerned about Australia's appalling and worsening extinction record and ongoing threats to iconic species such as Koalas and globally significant natural places such as the K'gari, Tasmanian, Ningaloo and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage sites;
2. WBEC opposes the Morrison Government's plans to make forest areas subject to Regional Forest Agreements exempt from the provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, even though the Federal Court has found that the Act does apply to these areas. Sarah Hanson-Young's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Save the Koala) Bill 2021 seeks to amend the EPBC Act to introduce a moratorium on the clearing of Koala habitat as well as remove the exemption of Regional Forest Agreements from requirements of the EPBC Act where there is, may, or is likely to be a significant impact on Koalas;
3. WBEC notes that the final report from the Independent Review of the EPBC Act 1999 found that "Australia's natural environment and iconic places are in an overall state of decline and are under increasing threat" and that the EPBC Act 1999 "is not fit to address current or future environmental challenges";
4. WBEC does not consider the Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Regional Forest Agreements) Bill 2020 nor its Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Standards and Assurance) Bill 2021 to be meaningful responses to the Independent Review;
5. WBEC asks the Committee to consider the views of the 30,000 Australians who put submissions into the Independent Review calling for a full legislative reform package for the EPBC Act 1999, including:
 - an independent regulator,
 - strong national environment standards,
 - a comprehensive assurance framework to ensure our laws are implemented transparently and fully, and
 - guaranteed rights for communities to ensure they can participate meaningfully in government decision-making and can access to key legal rights like merits and judicial review.
6. The proposed Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Save the Koala) Bill 2021 would prevent the Minister from approving an action under the EPBC Act where that action consists of or involves the clearing of Koala habitat, as well as remove the exemption of Regional Forest Agreements from requirements of the EPBC Act where there is, may, or is likely to be a

significant impact on Koalas. WBBEC is fully supportive of the Bill, and respectfully asks that the Committee recommends that the Amendment be passed.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Yours sincerely,

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Mike Moller
Regional Engagement Co-ordinator
Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc (WBBEC)
P.O. Box 97
QLD 4650



WBBEC acknowledges the traditional owners of Wide Bay Burnett country. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge that their sovereignty was never ceded.