

Government Senators' dissenting report

Government Senators' comments

1.1 Government Senators consider the premise of this inquiry to be essentially baseless and motivated by political considerations. The Abbott Government is not 'attacking the environment'; following the disaster of the carbon tax, green loans and home insulation programs under the previous government, the Abbott Government is not only repairing environmental policy but embarking on the most significant practical environmental reform program in Australia's history. This is exemplified in UNESCO's draft decision that the Great Barrier Reef be removed from the path to an in-danger listing.

1.2 Another key example of the Government's commitment to the environment is the Emissions Reduction Fund, which in its first reverse auction purchased 47 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent abatement, almost four times as much as that achieved under the previous government's carbon tax.

1.3 The Australian Government is investing more than \$2 billion to manage natural resources and enable communities to undertake practical action to improve the environment, including the conservation of biodiversity. This investment includes the National Landcare Programme along with complementary initiatives such as the Green Army, Working on Country and the Reef Trust.

1.4 The Government's redesigned Landcare programme returns decision-making back to local communities, enables commitment to long-term projects, and provides for a simpler and more effective reporting and application process.

1.5 The Government's Green Army program does not replace Landcare funding. Rather it is complementary to Landcare projects by providing groups with additional manpower to undertake local action on the ground, with the additional benefit of providing young Australians with practical skills and training.

1.6 While the committee acknowledges 'financial constraints' faced by the Government, it fails to acknowledge their extent or the urgent need for significant Budget savings measures to be implemented as soon as possible. In this context, the Government cannot and will not restore funding to Environmental Defenders Offices (EDOs).

1.7 The discontinuation of funding for EDOs does not reflect an adverse judgement on the merits of EDOs or their work, rather it reflects the broader context of stringent resource constraints.

Recommendation 1

1.8 That the committee commends the Government for undertaking massive investment in environmental programs in an unprecedented environment of fiscal constraint.

**Senator Anne Ruston
Deputy Chair
Senator for South Australia**

**Senator James McGrath
Senator for Queensland**