

Please attach the following **one-page summary** to your submission.

Comments on the Interim Report for the Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)

Summary

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Date: 31st July 2009

Which chapter(s) of the interim report are you commenting on? Chapters 2,12,13,19.

Key points of submission

Getting it right.

Confidentiality statement: Do you want this submission to be treated as confidential? No.

For fifty years I have watched the Australian landscape transform. So much of the inherent beauty of this country has disappeared and been replaced with images that demoralise, dehumanise and devalue us as a nation.

The majority of the Australian people have lives that do not participate in the protection of our environment. Rather, there is an expectation that environmental matters are the domain of a few individuals, a handful of environment groups, a collection of environment organisations, and governments.

But it's not working.

Environmental legislation across the country is wanting. It seems to me that there is just enough legislation to be seen to be doing something but without the backbone to actually accomplish anything meaningful nor demonstrable. Like a dog chasing its tail, a little bit of ground is gained here and there but over time still completely out of reach and unachievable.

Until we get completely serious about legislation, until we have a One Country Vision, until we depoliticise the environment, until we stop rubber-stamping inappropriate developments, we are going to end up with more of the same. We can add all the excellent suggestions from the EPBC Act Review submissions to the Act but we will still be left with commonwealth legislation that limits itself to matters of national environmental significance, so small in the scheme of things, that it dismisses the majority of the country and relies on states, territories and local governments to legislate the rest.

This does not work. It has never worked and it never will.

How many more times are we going to strangle legislation that ensures and promises business as usual. We know so much but we do so little. I can't help but feel that we have become so politically correct and silenced that we allow things to happen that we know to be so obviously and profoundly wrong.

If I wasn't so angry about the state of our environment I would cry. If I could stop crying about the state of our environment I would get angry. I challenge the appropriate people, the ones who have authority and the power to change things to get off the fence and stand up and shout out so loudly that I can hear you say that enough is enough. Give me some outrage and some action.

Local example:

A construction epidemic has engulfed our tiny town in the last few years. It is against the majority of the community's wishes. Five-storey high density tourist accommodations are swamping our foreshores. Expanding population is overtaking arable land. Marine turtles, including the endangered loggerhead turtle, nest (or attempt to) on what remains of our sand dunes. Did you know that observations have been made of marine turtles coming onto beaches and walking straight into campfires. It is inconceivable what effects all these extra night lights are doing to our turtles.

Three individuals in this town have poured through local government, state government and commonwealth government legislation, policies, plans ... and none of it either singularly or collectively is affording the turtles, nor their frequented habitats on land or in the ocean, proper and due care.

How can this be so? It's not until one tries to activate any of the legislation that it is soon realised how inadequate it all is.

To have the loggerhead turtle listed as an endangered species and then to have legislation that is unable to protect them is in my view criminal.

Certainly, we three individuals could grab a bit of this flimsy legislation from here and throw it together with another bit of flimsy legislation from there, sell our houses to hire a lawyer and take matters to court ... but without cohesive legislative backup we will fail.

With tails between our legs amidst the blinding glare from the cheesy smiles of the victorious developers we sulk home with a belly full of knowledge that once again we have had no legislative back up.

For individuals, environment groups and organisations to be effective we need comprehensive legislation to back us up. We do not have this yet. Give us this back up.

Turtles are subjected to many stressors: e.g., hunting, fishing, boat strikes, gut compaction from human debris, water pollution and disorientation from night lights. Cumulative effects need to be properly addressed as a matter of urgency.

ONE COUNTRY. ONE POLICY. ONE ACT. ONE COMMITMENT. ONE RESPONSIBILITY. ONE OUTCOME

One Country

In terms of the environment we are one country. Species and ecosystems do not restrict themselves with borders.

One Policy

Australia is inherently important. Australia is nationally environmentally significant as a whole. One piece is no more important than another and one part is inextricably linked to all the others. To have more than one policy state by state, territory by territory, local government by local government is nonsense, incomprehensible, complacent, inefficient and unachievable. We already have enough science and anecdotal information to get it right now. The Commonwealth Government is the only body we have that can lay claim to a policy that will ensure protection of the whole of Australia and it's oceans.

One Act

Protection of the environment is paramount. To have fragmented legislation across the country via states, territories and local governments has proven unworkable. The environment is in worse condition than when I was born. The EPBC Act has to take legislative responsibility for this entire country and take the best from all the legislation around the country and scrap the rest.

One Commitment

A commitment has to be undertaken by the Commonwealth Government wherein it is legally and morally required to protect the whole of the Australian environment. There is no-one else.

One Responsibility

With commitment comes responsibility.

One Outcome

Resolve, Recourse, Regulation, Representation, Resolution, Remedy, Renewal, Reconstruction, Rectification, Redemption, Restoration, Rehabilitation, Recovery, Responsibility, Respect, Reverence, Relief, Reward.