
Update on the Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)

27 March 2009

General information on the independent review of the EPBC Act

- On 31 October 2008, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts announced the commencement of an independent review of the EPBC Act and appointed Dr Allan Hawke to undertake the review.
- In undertaking the review, Dr Hawke is being supported by a Panel of Independent Experts and a secretariat housed within the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.
- The review is a requirement under section 522A of the EPBC Act.
- This is the first review under section 522A of the EPBC Act since the Act commenced on 16 July 2000.
- The review will be conducted according to the Terms of Reference which are available from the review website: www.environment.gov.au/epbc/review
- Further information about the review process can also be found on the review website.

Purpose of the review

- The review will assess the operation of the EPBC Act generally and the extent to which the objects of the Act have been achieved.
- This includes the appropriateness of current matters of National Environmental Significance and the effectiveness of the biodiversity and wildlife conservation arrangements.

Timing

- Dr Hawke will release an interim report for public comment by the end of June 2009.
- Dr Hawke is required to present his final report to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts by 31 October 2009.

Public consultation

- To ensure consideration of a wide range of views, there will be opportunities for public input and consultation throughout the review. This is a requirement under the Terms of Reference.
- The first stage of the public consultation process was the release of a discussion paper and a call for public submissions.
 - The period for making submissions closed on 19 December 2008.
 - Over 200 public submissions have been received.
- All written submissions made to the review are publicly available from the review website unless confidential.
- The second stage of the public consultation process is face-to-face meetings being held in each of the Australian capital cities from February to May 2009.

Scientific consultants

- Following on from the public submissions received as part of the independent review, scientific advisors have been appointed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts to further assist Dr Hawke in undertaking the review.
- Dr Hawke will be able to draw on the expertise of Professor Hugh Possingham and Professor David Lindenmeyer, who will be engaged as scientific consultants throughout the course of the review.
- Professor Hugh Possingham is currently an Australian Research Council Federation fellow and Director of the Commonwealth Environment Research Facility '*Applied Environmental Decision Analysis*'.
- Professor David Lindenmeyer is Research Professor at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at the Australian National University.

Interim Report

- An interim report on the review is scheduled to be released for public comment towards the end of June 2009.
- This report will outline issues raised from public submissions and the consultation process.
- The interim report will be published on the review website. Subscribers to the review mailing list will be notified of the report's release.

Senate Inquiry into the operation of the EPBC Act

- A separate inquiry into the operation of the EPBC Act is being undertaken by the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts.
- The Committee has indicated that it will present its report in two parts:
 - Part 1 was presented on 18 March 2009
 - Part 2 is due for release on 24 April 2009.
- The first Senate Committee report is available from the following website: www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eca_ctte/epbc_act.
- The Senate Inquiry is separate from Dr Hawke's independent review of the EPBC Act.
- At the request of the Minister, recommendations arising from the Senate Inquiry will be considered as part of Dr Hawke's review.