

SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XFG9-B

Name

Frances Bell

State or Territory

Western Australia

Areas of Interest

The objects of the Act; Threatened species; International obligations; Matters of National Environmental Significance; Environmental Impact Assessments; Great Barrier Reef; Cumulative impacts; Climate change; Compliance and enforcement; Decision making; Public participation in decision making; Biodiversity; Conservation; Wildlife trade; Commonwealth national parks; Nuclear; Water;

Attachment provided

Yes

Do you give permission for your submission to be published?

Yes - with my name and/or organisation (if included)

SUBMISSION RESPONSES

QUESTION 1: Some have argued that past changes to the EPBC Act to add new matters of national environmental significance did not go far enough. Others have argued it has extended the regulatory reach of the Commonwealth too far. What do you think?

I think the Commonwealth needs to have greater authority to stop rogue states from granting permission for development and industrial growth when it clearly damages wildlife, ecosystems and local communities.

QUESTION 2: How could the principle of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) be better reflected in the EPBC Act? For example, could the consideration of environmental, social and economic factors, which are core components of ESD, be achieved through greater inclusion of cost benefit analysis in decision making?

Not everything can be assessed on a cost benefit basis. A healthy environment and biodiversity are priceless and are much more important in the long term than financial gain.

QUESTION 6: What high level concerns should the review focus on? For example, should there be greater focus on better guidance on the EPBC Act, including clear environmental standards? How effective has the EPBC Act been in achieving its statutory objectives to protect the environment and promote ecologically sustainable development and biodiversity conservation? What have been the economic costs associated with the operation and administration of the EPBC Act?

The EPBC has failed dismally to protect the environment eg the Queensland government allowing Adani to go ahead with it's disastrous mine and infrastructure; loggers in Victoria decimating habitat for our endangered koala. We are fast approaching the point where there is no such thing as sustainable development.

ATTACHMENT

Additional information was provided as an attachment to this submission. The attachment is provided on the following pages of this document.

Dear Professor Samuel and Independent Review Panel,

I would like to make a submission into the 2019-2020 Independent Review of the EPBC Act. This submission will cover the issues I see with how the EPBC Act fails to protect the environment, especially matters of national environmental significance; the lack of community consultation under the current Act; and what needs to change to ensure the EPBC Act works as it was intended.

My name is Frances Bell. I am a registered vet nurse and a wildlife rehabilitator. I see first hand, in each of my roles and on a daily basis, the tragic consequences of the inadequate EPBC and it's poor enforcement. Every day I must deal with wildlife who are displaced, orphaned, ill and injured due to manmade problems - overdevelopment, climate change, and lack of adequate water supplies. My concern is not just for the unique non-human life with which we share this planet, but for entire ecosystems whether terrestrial or marine.

Issues that concern me are deforestation, our drying continent, climate change in all it's forms including the recent disastrous bushfires, ocean warming and acidification, drought, floods and ever stronger cyclones. These issues must now be urgently addressed if we hope to preserve any biodiversity and not be catastrophically impacted ourselves.

To address these issues, I make the following recommendations:

Australia cannot return to business as usual after the catastrophic 2019-2020 summer bushfires. The same laws and policies that have failed wildlife over decades and done little to address the climate crisis can't be relied on to help us recover after the bushfires. The fires, and land clearing over the last several decades, have driven the koala almost to extinction, and it may be many months before we know how many other species now teeter on the brink of extinction.

A new National Environment Act should enshrine Federal Government leadership over nature protections, contain real safeguards against extinction, including ending the destruction of endangered species habitat, and sets out clear rights of appeal and consultation for communities.

Recovery plans must be developed and implemented for threatened species, which the Act has largely failed to do in its 20 years. In addition, the status of all species should be urgently reviewed. The precautionary principle must apply where data is deficient - we cannot afford to lose any more of our unique species that interconnect to ensure our own survival.

Establish an independent National Environment Commission to ensure we develop a fit-for-purpose, coordinated national (state and federal) system of environmental protections and policy responses necessary to support restoration of our environment to health and ensure regulatory resilience to future impacts, publicly report every year on the impact of conservation action and funding, and show clearly whether natural values are recovering.

Establish an independent Environment Protection Agency to act as watch-dog over government, and ensure our laws are properly enforced.

Ensure that sufficient money, people and resources are put in place so that nature can recover; and ensure a central role for community, with guaranteed rights and participation in planning and decision-making.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission, if you wish to contact me about the contents of my submission I can be reached at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Frances Bell