

SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XFNH-1

Name

Abigail Thomas

State or Territory

New South Wales

Areas of Interest

Threatened species; Great Barrier Reef; Climate change; Biodiversity; Conservation;

Attachment provided

Yes

Do you give permission for your submission to be published?

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

SUBMISSION RESPONSES

This submission was provided as an attachment only. The attachment is provided on the following pages of this document.

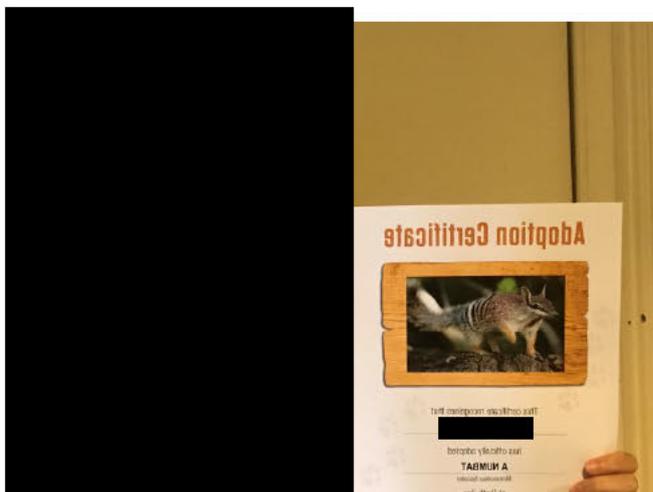


8 April 2020

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 my personal connection to nature, the shortcomings of the current EPBC Act and my recommendations for how environmental protection should work at the federal level.

I originally come from England but moved to Australia and became a citizen twenty years ago. One of the main things that attracted me to this country was the natural landscape, the birds and the wide open skies. The exotic nature of the birds in Australia (even in Sydney itself) was so exciting for me, having grown up in London where you would only see the odd sparrow or a robin if you're lucky! Since moving to Australia I have enjoyed bushwalking, camping, kayaking, time at the beach with my husband and children and the beautiful pockets of national park within cities as well as the bigger ones in regional areas. My older daughter is obsessed with numbats and has campaigned and fundraised to help preserve this threatened species (although she has never been lucky enough to see one for real) – photo attached of her with her 'adopted' numbat.



Like many Australians, I was devastated by the summer of bushfires and smoke haze we have just experienced. Many of the beautiful places we had visited for holidays have been wiped out, as well as so many wild animals and species. On top of this, it seems that additional logging and destruction of koala habitats has been allowed to happen even since the bushfires, adding further threats to vulnerable wildlife.

My analysis of the current EPBC Act is that it fails to provide environmental protection at a federal level and devolves nearly all responsibility to states and territories who have not always discharged this responsibility wisely. For example the recent koala habitat destruction in Portland, Victoria where bushfire-affected koalas were felled in their trees was a terrible example of negligence by the states to one of Australia's most iconic species at a critical time. The current Act also does not address climate change which is one of the biggest threats to Australia's natural environment, and fails to address air pollution or water management effectively.

Following this devastating bushfire season, it is clear that something needs to change. This once-in-a-decade opportunity to review the Act is very timely. I believe we now need a brand new Environment Act that gives federal government responsibility for protection of endangered species and their habitats, as well as oversight of threats to the environment from carbon emissions. Given political interference in this issue, it would make sense to have an independent federal commission that can set environmental standards and perhaps also an independent Environment Protection Agency that can assess and enforce these standards. The environment has such importance in its own right, as well as its impact on human health and happiness. However, even taking a purely economic view, the environment drives huge economic returns and jobs in Australia through tourism to its unique natural landscape. These bodies should also give a central role to local communities so they can influence outcomes in their own areas.

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,

Abigail Thomas