

SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XQ1Y-Z

Name

Adnil Ramos

State or Territory

New South Wales

Areas of Interest

Threatened species; Heritage; Matters of National Environmental Significance; Great Barrier Reef; Cumulative impacts; Climate change; Compliance and enforcement; Public participation in decision making; Biodiversity; Conservation; 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

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

22/4/2020

Dear Professor Samuel and Independent Review Panel,

I would like to make a submission to the 2019-2020 Independent Review of the EPBC Act.

I am a teacher and mother of two who believes in nature's importance to allow us to connect with ourselves and others, and the systems that keep us alive. Since they were aged 3 and 5, I've taken my kids camping during school holidays in national parks around NSW where they can run wild and explore to their hearts' content, amused by the wallabies and goannas poking around the camp kitchen or impressed by advancing carpets of spherical blue soldier crabs along the mud flats, not to mention the surreal calls of bellbirds and whipbirds in the bush or the sight of kangaroo mobs grazing at sunset. Of course nothing puts our lives into perspective like the peace and wonder of the night sky in the bush on a cold night - no memes, city lights or disturbing headlines to distract. Apart from camping and bushwalking, snorkeling is therapeutic for me: floating around that peaceful alien world at our doorstep in Sydney cannot compare with anything man-made, in my opinion. Unfortunately, these environments and experiences are being seriously threatened or destroyed at an alarming pace by overdevelopment, land clearing, and climate change.

Case in point, consider the disastrous summer Australia has just experienced. On our last camping trip in December 2019, the entire campsite was evacuated due to bushfire danger. Many campers chose to break their camps frantically and retreat home, while others elected to stay in nearby hotels or hostels, risking all their equipment left at the site, only returning after the danger passed. Following that, our New Year's Eve in Canberra turned into a somewhat disturbing and suffocating movie marathon in our tiny bush-side cabin as the night's local festivities had been cancelled due to the heaviest smoke pollution the area had ever encountered (I believe it was the worst conditions of any place on earth that day). Yet we were extremely lucky compared to some of our fellow Australians whose entire lives or livelihoods were demolished by this disaster. While some beg to differ, I agree with this article which states that human-driven climate change was a major contributor to the intensity and prevalence of Australia's recent fires.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-51742646>

On a related note, we have also noticed a huge decline in the presence of insects during our camping trips, which is very worrying to anyone familiar with the natural food chain, whose highest members like humans indirectly depend on the health of every link below. While some cringe at the idea of moths, bees, and bull ants wandering around their campsite, their absence in the wild is actually quite disturbing. Yet this is what we experienced on our last few camping trips. This might be attributed to both land clearing and climate change, which can stress vital insect populations to the point of no return. Please see the following:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/10/plummeting-insect-numbers-threaten-collapse-of-nature>

Land clearing is another hugely worrying issue, as the eradication of old growth trees, bush, and forests means tremendous added pressure on national and state forests as the fauna surviving the destruction is forced to migrate for food and habitat. The pressure can be so great as to throw ancient and delicate systems off balance, rendering entire populations of our wildlife homeless, hungry, and utterly vulnerable. Apart from this, land clearing negatively affects other facets of neighbouring environments, like soil and groundwater quality, the precipitation cycle, local climate, and of course, biodiversity across the plant and animal hierarchies, all things which our own species is completely dependent on for survival. I fear that future generations will not be able to enjoy the beautiful wilds of Australia nor even survive with ease as we have due to the pristine environments we so love getting irreversibly damaged by the effects of land clearing. This has not been stemmed by the EPBC Act, highlighted in the article below.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/jun/03/land-clearing-up-more-than-50-in-nsw-even-before-new-laws-introduced>

Lastly, regarding aquatic environments Australians rightly feel so proud of, the well-being of these places is also being greatly compromised, even sacrificed, due to agricultural and mining runoff as well as the effects of land clearing, development, and global warming itself, despite the great number of jobs and economic opportunity provided by the reef tourism and coastal recreation industries. I include a link on the infamous effects of climate change and modern industry on the Great Barrier reef, though these effects can be witnessed in ocean environments on many coastal and ocean areas around Australia and beyond.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tamarathiessen/2020/04/07/great-barrier-reef-coral-bleaching-climate-change-tragedy/#1eb9f3e771b0>

Therefore I ask that you consider modification and strengthening of the EPBC Act to prevent such devastating outcomes. I support the stance of the Citizen's Action and EDO that the EPBC Act:

1. Creates national environment laws that genuinely protect Australia's natural and cultural heritage. The Federal Government must retain responsibility for current matters of national environmental significance and protect them effectively. National oversight and enforcement must be expanded to land clearing, biodiversity and ecosystems, water resources, climate change, air pollution and protected areas.
2. Considers greenhouse gas emissions in the matters of national environmental significance, so an assessment process is triggered for a development wherever emissions exceed a threshold.
3. Establishes an independent National Environmental Sustainability and Restoration Commission to set national environmental standards and undertake strategic regional planning and report on national environmental performance, identifying areas requiring restoration and regeneration of natural systems. The commission would also develop national, regional, threat abatement and species-level conservation plans and mechanisms for incentivising compliance.
4. Sets up an independent National Environmental Protection Authority that operates at arms-length from Government to conduct transparent environmental assessments and inquiries as well as undertake monitoring, compliance and enforcement actions.
5. Guarantees citizens' and community rights and provides mechanisms for participation in environmental decision-making and open access to all relevant information.
6. Conducts a review of the Act every 5 years, instead of every 10 years, to ensure it is agile enough to react to the accelerating rate of change in our natural environment.

Thank you for your consideration. I submit this with the hope that the remaining iconic beauty and essence of Australia can be protected in perpetuity and cared for as conscientiously as it was for so many years by the Aboriginal peoples of this land.

Sincerely,

Adnil Ramos

New South Wales,

Camping with some Friends

