

SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XQFN-A

Name

Peter Moore

Organisation

Anglican - Anglican Church Southern Queensland

State or Territory

Queensland

Areas of Interest

The objects of the Act; Threatened species; International obligations; Indigenous Australians; 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; 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?

Past changes to the EPBC Act to add new matters of national environmental significance did not go far enough.

ATTACHMENT

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



19th April 2020

Dear Professor Samuel and Independent Review Panel

I wish to make a submission to 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 in matters of national environmental significance and climate change;
- The lack of involvement of citizens and communities in the APBC Act; and
- What needs to change to ensure the EPBC Act works as it was intended.

Thank you for accepting my late submission.

The deadline for submissions was extremely difficult for Christians as Churches, other Christian organisations and members have been challenged over recent months with drought, bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 crisis. These events extended ministry to the broader community to help people deal with those events. The COVID-19 crisis also caused highly significant changes to how we work making it more time consuming. This was in all a busy time in the Christian calendar, Advent leading to Christmas and the 40 days of Lent leading to Holy Week and Easter.

The issues that need to be considered in the Review extend beyond science, environmental and economic ones: they include the deeply moral and ethical challenge we must face together.

I grew up on the coast in tropical Queensland have lived and worked in rural areas of Queensland and NSW enjoying National Parks, bushwalking and camping. My wife and I have retired to Sanctuary Pocket, Forest Lake, Qld and enjoy walking daily around upper Blunder Creek. We still camp and bushwalk when we can, often with our grandchildren too. This exposure to nature is very rewarding, but it also serves as a frequent reminder of what we are losing as we fail to protect habitat and fail to 'safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'.

I am deeply concerned about the inadequacies of the EPBC Act to protect our natural environment. As it stands, Australia has one of the highest per capita emissions of carbon dioxide in the world. It ranks number one in the world for mammal extinction and ranks within the top 10 countries for deforestation. Climate

change is one of the greatest environmental threats to our nation, yet our signature environmental law makes no mention of damage to our climate in over 1,000 pages of legislation. The recent bushfires are only a preview of the devastating consequences that damage to our climate has in store for Australia if we fail to act.

We have been entrusted with the care of the earth, the physical and biological environment that is our common home. Inadequate protection in law and practice is allowing the earth to be harmed, in many cases permanently. The Global Footprint Network, in their National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts 2019, calculated Australia's Overshoot day as 30th March 2019. A country's overshoot day is the date on which Earth Overshoot Day would fall if all of humanity consumed like the people in this country. The World Overshoot Day 2019 was 29th July 2019. This means that humanity is currently using nature 1.75 times faster than our planet's ecosystems can regenerate.

We have a moral obligation not to harm others and to be fair, and care for the vulnerable. This includes providing for our children and respecting future generations. The consequences of damage to our climate and other aspects of our common home are hurting the most vulnerable now and in the future. We need to return to our proper relationship to our common home. When we act, the world is restored to its natural abundance and beauty and our heritage is protected. When we act the world becomes fairer, the vulnerable are better cared for and we fulfil our duty to those who came before us and will come after us.

I am a Christian leader and work to promote care of the planet as Chair of Angligreen, Anglican Church Southern Queensland, Deputy Chair QCEN (Queensland Churches Environmental Network), Committee Member Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) and Climate Reality Leader, Climate Reality Project among other groups. One of the Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion is "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth."

I want the EPBC Act to be reformed to ensure that our natural and physical environment, that sustains life and has intrinsic value, is cared for and continues to sustain life and be enjoyed by generations to come.

Changes I seek to the EPBC Act include:

1. Create truly national environment laws that genuinely protect Australia's natural and cultural heritage. The Commonwealth Government must retain responsibility for current matters of national environmental significance and protect them effectively. National oversight must be expanded to land clearing, biodiversity and ecosystems and biodiversity, water resources, climate change, air pollution and protected areas.
2. Upgrade the EPBC Act to ensure that it takes a holistic approach to protecting the environment and biodiversity. Significant gaps in the legislation need filling as a matter of urgency, before there is further irreparable damage to our common home. These gaps include climate change and related matters as

well as the combined and cumulative effects of 'development' and development proposals.

3. Change the EPBC Act so that the objectives, focus, detail and implementation is on protecting our common home and our natural biological and physical environment. We are part of and dependent upon the Earth's systems, not separate from them. All life as we know it can only flourish if our environment is healthy and suitable enough to be able to support it. Furthermore, our physical environment (especially a stable and hospitable climate, clean air and water) and biodiversity are of intrinsic value and we have a moral duty to protect and care for them. We therefore have a responsibility to care for the biological and physical systems on which life depends, particularly for future generations and other species with which we share the Earth. This is a fundamental teaching of all faiths and is seen in the wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The traditional ways they managed the environment and their customs for thousands of years demonstrates this. This duty of care of the planet is far more profound than any more short-term considerations such as the economy or job creation and needs to be recognised in the Act and its implementation. This is a key issue for me as a Christian.
4. Change the balance in the EPBC Act so that implementation favours protecting vulnerable species and communities and protecting, maintaining and restoring healthy physical environments such as air, water and climate. Currently these have no voice at all. Making these changes will also help restore community trust in government legislating for the common good instead of short-term interests of a few.
5. Ensure that the Commonwealth Government retains responsibility for Matters of National Environmental Significance in the EPBC Act and expand that national oversight to include:
 - a. identification and protection of critical habitats for threatened species and the mandatory implementation of plans for recovery and restoration of biodiversity and health of physical environments and plans for threat abatement;
 - b. national protections for water resources and national parks and reserves; and
 - c. setting binding national standards and objectives with which all States and Territories must comply.
6. Expand Matters of National Environmental Significance to include:
 - a. emissions of greenhouse gases and air and water pollutants, so that an assessment process is triggered for a development wherever emissions exceed or could exceed a threshold;
 - b. cumulative damage (in particular reductions in numbers of a species, areas of habitat, air and water pollution, loss of water), so that an

assessment process is triggered for a development wherever emissions exceed a threshold; and

- c. Ecosystems of National Importance that are essential for people and nature, such as critical water catchments, key biodiversity areas and climate refugia habitat for refuges from our changing climate.
7. Add provision for emergency listings and protections for places that are subject to damaging events, such as large bushfires and storms.
 8. Remove the exemption of Regional Forest Agreements from the legal requirements of the EPBC Act.
 9. Ensure that the EPBC Act excludes mechanisms that could enable landholders and other proponents to make decisions around protecting matters of national environmental significance and biodiversity. This is because landholders and other proponents have conflicts of interest.
 10. Establish an independent National Environmental Sustainability and Restoration Commission to set national environmental standards and undertake strategic regional planning and report on national environmental performance and identify 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.
 11. Establish 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.
 12. Guarantee citizens' and community rights and establish mechanisms for accessible and open participation by citizens and communities in environmental decision-making at every level and open access to all relevant information.
 13. Review of the EPBC 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.
 14. Provide adequate resourcing to enable the EPBC Act to be implemented robustly.

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 AngligrreenACSQ@gmail.com or [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Peter A Moore

Chair Angligrreen

Queensland 4078



**Peter Moore sitting on a track bench
at Koolanbilla Lookout, Lamington National Park.**