

# SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XY34-5

## **Name**

Amanda White

## **State or Territory**

Queensland

## **Areas of Interest**

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

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

Dear Professor Samuel and Independent panel,

Thank you for this opportunity to make submission into the 2019 – 2020 Independent Review of the EPBC Act.

This submission covers what I feel are the shortfalls in the EPBC Act and its failure to deliver effective and ongoing protection for the environment and matters of environmental significance.

The current lack of community consultation needs to be addressed, and changes to the Act are required to ensure the Act works effectively.

As a British immigrant arriving in Queensland in 1981, I was constantly intrigued by the array of wildlife and native bushland. We were encouraged as children to make our adventures and play in nature, which I very happily embraced, and for which has set the precedent for my adult life.

I am now extraordinarily fortunate to live in Far North Qld alongside a World Heritage area.

I feel a strong connection to the natural world and am deeply aware of the positive benefits it brings to my life. To know that I am a part of a living world, that I am a custodian of this place whilst I am here are essential elements of who I am.

No more than three months after I moved here I lost my Father to a short fight with an aggressive cancer, I cannot imagine how much harder my experience of loss would have been had I not had nature to retire to in times of my despair.

My fondest memories are those I have spent with family, friends and times alone amongst nature. It is the core of who I am, and its protection is paramount to the health and well being of each and every one of us.

It is also long overdue that nature be respected simply for nature's sake. The processes and outcomes of a strong well-structured and implemented EPBC Act should be a key element in providing protection and long-term positive outcomes for all aspects of the natural environment.

In the last 39 years I have witnessed a rapid decline in species numbers and diversity in the areas I have called home.

I have seen firsthand the devastation left by clear felling of Tasmania's Old Growth Forests, spent 9 years shoulder to shoulder with my local community in the hope of saving remnant rainforest and koala habitat from the quarry industry in South East Qld, I have witnessed the excessive use of pesticides and herbicides by farmers and local councils in Far North Queensland along with the massive loss of rainforest habitat, and vividly recall the days of the Bejelke Peterson Government and its devastating effect on the Australian landscape, a mind set and farming practice that is still alive and well in parts of this State.

These examples are only some of the issues that the current EPBC Act fail to give required Governance and regulation to.

Having read in full the Environmental Defenders Office's 'Response to Discussion Paper: A summary for the community'. I fully support and endorse the recommendations.

In summary the key actions to be undertaken are:

- 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.
- Create a new National Environment Act that enshrines Federal Government leadership over nature protections, contains real safeguards against extinction, including ending the destruction of endangered species habitat, and sets out clear rights of appeal and consultation for communities.
- Develop and implement recovery plans for threatened species, which the Act has largely failed to do in its 20 years.
- 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.
- Ensure a central role for community, with guaranteed rights and participation in planning and decision-making.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this submission.

Amanda White