

SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XYNH-M

Name

Andrea White

State or Territory

Victoria

Areas of Interest

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 Review Panel,

Re: submission for the 2019-2020 Independent Review of the EPBC Act.

My name is Andrea White. I live in Preston, Victoria, and over the last decade I have advocated for the protection of threatened places like the Tarkine in Tasmania and the Mountain Ash forests of Victoria. Despite the internationally renowned ecological significance of these environments - their roles in carbon capture, supporting endangered species, and human wellbeing¹ - they continue to be devastated by extractive industries.

Since the EPBC Act came into operation, 7.7 million hectares of threatened species' habitat has been destroyed.² **The EPBC Act is not fulfilling its intended purpose and needs to be significantly amended or replaced by strong new environment laws.** The recent bushfire catastrophe and the accelerating effects of climate change make rigorous environmental protection laws more important than ever. We need stronger environment laws in order to meet the challenges of a changing climate and prevent further fragmentation and degradation of ecologically significant environments.

I see the main impediment to the functioning of the EPBC Act to be the numerous state exemptions, such as RFAs, which contradict the overarching purpose of the Act to preserve our environment and biodiversity. The Act should not allow for these exemptions.

The Victorian community has overwhelmingly indicated that they want remaining native forests protected. Last year the 'Future of Our Forests' and RFA community submissions took place in Victoria. The survey and submission data demonstrates that most Victorians agree with the scientific community and want better protection for native forests, and specifically an end to our taxpayer-funded native forest logging industry. Despite this the Victorian RFAs have been renewed ("modernised") and native forest logging continues. It is clear that scientific advice, public opinion, and our federal environment laws have no weight against destructive industry interests. **The EPBC Act needs to be extended to prevent practises, such as native forest logging, that are inimical to biodiversity and the survival of endangered species.**

The Act needs a new overarching object that puts the preservation of our environment and biodiversity front and centre, and crucially, the Act needs enforcement mechanisms that make sure the primary object is enacted. The Act should include a primary object to the following effect:

¹ The Tarkine contains one of the largest temperate rainforests on earth. In 2012 the Australian Heritage Council found the Tarkine to be of outstanding heritage value and recommended National Heritage Listing. This recommendation was rejected in 2013 under pressure from logging and mining interests.

Victoria's Mountain Ash forests support a number of threatened and endangered species, including the Leadbeaters Possum, Greater Glider, and Sooty Owl. They play a critical role filtering water into our catchments. They are some of the most carbon dense forests on earth and their protection can play a major role in our efforts to mitigate climate change.

² ACF Fast-tracking Extinction Report: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/auscon/pages/6451/attachments/original/1536271571/08-2018_16pp_ACF_Fast-Tracking_Extinction_report_final_WEB.PDF?1536271571

The primary aim of this Act is to conserve and protect Australia's environment, its natural heritage and biological diversity including genes, species and ecosystems, its land and waters, and the life-supporting functions they provide.

The fact that degradation of high conservation value environment is continuing on a large scale across Australia indicates the Act is currently ineffective. The most recent State of the Environment Report (2016) stated that:

Australia's biodiversity is under increased threat and has, overall, continued to decline.

Australia is the only developed nation identified as global deforestation hotspot.³ The Act must elevate environmental protection and biodiversity conservation as the primary aim of the Act, consistent with Australia's international obligations. State based exemptions must be reigned in, and environmentally destructive industries such as native forest logging and fossil fuel extraction must observe the same environmental laws as other industries.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my submission. If you wish to contact me about the contents of my submission, I can be reached at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Andrea White

³ WWF 2018 Living Planet Report: <https://www.wwf.org.au/knowledge-centre/living-planet-report#gs.46yqtz>