

SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XGPJ-6

Name

Angie Lalor

State or Territory

Victoria

Areas of Interest

The objects of the Act; Cumulative impacts; Climate change; Public participation in decision making; Biodiversity;

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,

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 EPBC Act; and
- What needs to change to ensure the EPBC Act works as it was intended.

I am 35, a mother of three young children, living in the Dandenong Ranges of Melbourne's South Eastern suburbs. As a family, we spend a lot of time appreciating nature – camping, going to the beach, walking and picnicking in the bush, bird watching etc. We feel it is important to instil this love and appreciation of nature in our children at an early age as it is a scientifically proven antidote to the fast and stressful world that we live in. But also because we are part of it – we want our kids to grow up knowing that we are part of the natural environment, and not separate from it. I notice a huge improvement in my mental health and wellbeing, and also that of my family, when we spend regular time out in nature.

Recent bushfires burned right onto the beach at the place we go for holidays, hugely impacting surrounding forests and bushland, water quality, and local community. We have also noticed an obvious decrease in insect life, even over the last 6 years (time we have lived in our current house). I am terrified for my children and what they will face in their future – some days I feel so fearful that I wonder if I made the right decision in having kids. I also feel guilty that this is my motivator to becoming more active and vocal about the climate emergency, when I know that millions of people around the world have been or are being hugely affected by climate change right now. I guess it is so much more personal when you have to picture your children trying to survive the unimaginable circumstances that are forecast for the future if we do not make drastic changes right now.

I'm deeply concerned about the inadequacies of the EPBC Act to protect our natural environment. As it stands, Australia has the 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. In particular, climate change is one of the greatest environmental threats to our nation, yet our signature environmental law makes no mention of climate change in over 1,000 pages of legislation. The recent bushfires are only a preview of the devastating impact climate change has in store for Australia if we fail to act.

I want reform of the EPBC Act to ensure our unique natural environment continues to be enjoyed by generations to come. My asks for the EPBC Act include:

1. Create truly 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 must be expanded to land

- clearing, biodiversity and ecosystems, water resources, climate change, air pollution and protected areas.
2. Inclusion of 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. 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.
 4. 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.
 5. Guarantee citizens' and community rights and establish mechanisms for participation in environmental decision-making and open access to all relevant information.
 6. 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 of my submission. If you wish to contact me about the contents of my submission, I can be reached at [REDACTED]

Angie Lalor

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