

SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XGR9-Q

Name

Alarna Twight

State or Territory

New South Wales

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 Review Panel,

I would like to make a submission into 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 matters of national environmental significance; the lack of community consultation under the current Act; and what needs to change to ensure the EPBC Act works as it was intended.

My name is Alarna Twilight. I was born in a coastal area of Australia and have always had a close relationship with the outdoors – from swimming and surfing at the beach, to bushwalking, camping and enjoying other parts of Australia reached after long car trips – Phillip Island, Mallacoota, the Great Ocean Road; the Blue Mountains region and all of coastal NSW; Noosa. We now live on the edge of urban rainforest, surrounded by trees and birdcalls, lizards, snakes – you name it.

I can't say what I love the most – in Australia, we are so lucky to live alongside the natural world. One of our favourite family spots is Crescent Head – the bush by the sea. It's rugged, empty and largely untouched. We've spent many years camping here and it's always a welcome respite from the daily grind. I've always love looking for koalas in the eucalyptus trees in the national park and now my children do, too. Occasionally we see one and it feels like finding a national treasure. We were there during the summer bushfires of 2019-20 and spotted a baby koala with its mother high up in a tree. I was sickened with dread. The bush was tinder dry and all I could do was pray that no fire would hit this area as these precious creatures would be like sitting ducks.

We have watched the highway bypass link city-to-city between Sydney, Newcastle, Port Macquarie and beyond. I can see the benefit of this infrastructure upgrade, but seeing the forest destruction is still devastating.

It is even worse to hear of deforestation in the Tarkine rainforest of Tasmania by international corporations looking for woodchip or expensive 'rare' timbers¹. Logging in bushfire-hit areas of NSW without first undertaking examination of the flora and fauna species that are under threat is mindless², especially when the economic and environmental negatives outweigh the positives. Land-clearing under the Liberal Government in NSW is so high it triggered a secret internal review, and has continued unabated even after the bushfires scorched more than 5 million hectares of land³. Seeing the Great Barrier Reef mass-bleach due to ocean-warming⁴, while Australia engages in climate-wrecking activity makes me lose trust in the government and the EPBC altogether. Meanwhile, the Coalition government is still trying to lure oil corporations back to the Great Australian Bight, instead of seeking to protect it⁵ – even after the community uproar and subsequent backtrack of Norwegian oil giant, Equinor, from the region.

Australia cannot return to business as usual after the catastrophic 2019-2020 summer bushfires. The current EPBC 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.

Some recommendations are:

- Create a new National Environment Act that makes the Federal Government lead our country's 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 consideration of my submission. If you wish to contact me about the contents of my submission I can be reached [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Alarna Twight



Citations:

¹Inglis, R., 2020. *Bob Brown Releases Tarkine Logging Footage, Provoking Libs' Ire.* [online] The Advocate. Available at: <<https://www.theadvocate.com.au/story/5208874/bob-brown-releases-tarkine-logging-footage-provoking-libs-ire/>> [Accessed 27 April 2020].

²Hannam, P., 2020. *EPA Approves Logging Without Looking At Koala Impacts After Bushfires.* [online] The Sydney Morning Herald. Available at: <<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/epa-approves-logging-without-looking-at-koala-impacts-after-bushfires-20200417-p54kru.html>> [Accessed 27 April 2020].

³Gbrmpa.gov.au. 2020. *Reef Health.* [online] Available at: <<http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/the-reef/reef-health>> [Accessed 27 April 2020].

⁴Morton, A., 2020. *NSW Land-Clearing Approvals Increased 13-Fold Since Laws Relaxed In 2016.* [online] the Guardian. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/27/nsw-land-clearing-approvals-increased-13-fold-since-laws-relaxed-in-2016>> [Accessed 27 April 2020].

⁵Curtis, D., 2020. *Equinor Ends Bight Oil Exploration Project.* [online] Collie Mail. Available at: <<https://www.colliemail.com.au/story/6647696/equinor-ends-bight-oil-exploration-project/>> [Accessed 27 April 2020].