

SUBMISSION TO THE EPBC ACT REVIEW

ANON-K57V-XZR6-7

Name

Andrea McMurtrie

State or Territory

Queensland

Areas of Interest

Threatened species; International obligations; Matters of National Environmental Significance; Environmental Impact Assessments; Climate change; Compliance and enforcement; Biodiversity; Conservation; Commonwealth national parks; 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,

Please accept this submission for the 2019-2020 Independent review of the EPBC Act. This submission will cover:

- Why the EPBC Act and this review is important to me
- What I would like to see from the government & the EPBC Act

For as long as I can remember I've had a love of nature and an appreciation of the beauty that only the natural world can bring to our lives. At the age of ten a school 'Pollution' project opened my eyes to the impact humans have on the planet and I have been interested in the health of our environment ever since.

I live in Brisbane and despite having travelled extensively overseas my favourite place to visit is our local Stradbroke Island where I never fail to be thrilled by seeing wildlife in their natural habitat. Walking the Point Lookout gorge - dolphins, turtles and rays are often sighted, however ocean plastics are now a major marine hazard with increasing volumes of beach debris evidencing this. Being an island only accessible by barge and ferry has slowed development thereby protecting wildlife to some degree however improperly monitored future developments would place this special place at risk. I worry for the future existence of many of the native species in Australia when I hear of declining numbers and loss of biodiversity and habitat. There have always been concerns but the messages of the detrimental effects are becoming louder & clearer.

In Australia, despite our large spaces and relatively small populations we have unique problems.

- The WWF Australia says we have the worst rate of mammal extinction in the world
- Three Australian animals have become extinct since 2009 and 17 species are likely to be extinct in the next 20yrs - The Wilderness Society
- According to the Wilderness Society our land clearing rates are the worst in the developed world - we bulldoze a football field area every 2minutes & prior to the recent bushfires only 50% of our forests were still intact
- Recent bush fires have put increasing pressure on our already stressed wildlife and habitats
- More than any other developed nation Australia is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change

Our environment doesn't just make us the envy of the world, it is also a fundamental part of our national economy. I lived in Germany for 3 years and many Germans would say how they dreamed of visiting Australia – it was all about the Great Barrier Reef, our open spaces, unique animals and the expectation of an unpolluted natural environment. Many other overseas tourists come here for the same reasons and we must protect these areas to our fullest capacity. We use our iconic species to advertise Australia but are not adequately protecting their habitats to ensure their survival. Discussion in the community before the recent fires was that koalas were functionally extinct and I hope this was not true as their existence is even more precarious now. David Attenborough been heard to say that the loss of any one species will likely negatively impact many others and we may never know the full consequences of such a loss.

The laws we have in place currently are not working and they are not protecting our wildlife and their habitats sufficiently. I am calling on the panel to do the following:

- 1) Create an independent Commonwealth Environmental Commission comprising of suitably qualified scientists to evaluate applications and programs. This authority would act as an environmental watchdog implementing and overseeing national environmental regulation. It should operate transparently and report publicly.
- 2) Acknowledge the effects of climate change and participate fully in global efforts to reduce carbon emissions.
- 3) Ensure that funding and resources are in place to bring species back from the brink of extinction.
- 4) Mandate to improve water quality and flows in our river systems to provide clean water to all areas.
- 5) Ensure that community based organisations will play a central role in participating in planning and decision making.

As the review panel you are in the unique position of being custodians of the future of our remarkable flora and fauna. We are on an environmental precipice so please take this opportunity to strengthen the weak and ineffectual laws currently in place in Australia. It is imperative that we protect any wilderness remaining and your decisions are foundational to the health and welfare of all who inhabit this country. Once forests are gone and species are lost there is no going back.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission.

Kind regards

Andrea McMurtrie

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