

## Lucia Quearry

As a rural landowner and a volunteer land manager of a privately owned conservation Reserve in the Lower Great Southern I reviewed your documents from my perspective, from my experience in reporting illegal clearing and from watching community concerns disregarded.

My overarching comments are:

- Australia, is losing its biodiversity at an alarming rate through human induced and naturally induced actions and this Act even with its proposed amendments does not adequately protect what remains
- Governments at all levels are working to streamline permits to allow business to operate without delays with little regard to the National Estate with Acts, guidelines and recommendations purposely being written and amended to support economic development
- The EP Act is a prime example of a framework set up as law, regulation and permission which allows the destruction of the very estate it was to protect; it actually advises business and developers and planners how to clear and extinguish the Estate
- The Environment has no voice in this Act, it has no way to object to the continual erosion of Protection by the obscure language, lack of transparency, procedural obfuscation and lack of written/open judgements made by the regulatory body; nor can those members of the community who speak on behalf of the Environment be privy to decisions and evidence which allow the erosion
- Clearing Regulations whether roadside or landscape are not strong enough to protect; the procedures are written to default to allow clearing with the onus of protection being of secondary importance in applications
- The penalties for illegal clearing are extraordinarily inappropriate; there is no regulation considered, no economic incentive to NOT break the law; and there is little support for the community when they raise their voice against business
- No offsets should be allowed in clearing requests
- Clearing permits which are set over years are open to abuse by the proponents with clearing by stealth being the standard operating procedure with no contact or controls or review required

I believe this Act needs to be completely re-written with the protection of the environment to be its purpose. Don't continue to amend, give the Act strength. Make this document a required procedural framework for the EPA which also has been emasculated for the purpose of economic development.

Growth in the economy will not be the important factor in the future, the health of the environment in which we are trying to exist will be important; the air we breathe, the water we drink and the soil in which we grow our food!

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