

Aileen Marwung Walsh

I would like to make a brief submission here.

With regard to country, which you call 'the environment', since colonisation country has been destroyed to such a degree that country is no longer recognisable as the place Aboriginal people owned and protected for over 50 000 years.

I remind the government of this, because the destruction of country is not just about the soil, the trees and the animals, birds and insects, but the rain and the air we breathe.

It is essential that country is provided with the strongest protection possible from the destructive elements that do not care or value any life.

Because without country, that is not safe from the depredations of development and mining, everyone loses, not just the initial loss of life destroyed, but the impact upon generations into the future.

The ruthless coalition of corporations and businesses in collusion with the Western Australian State Government is short sighted in its view. Because although the science now supports Aboriginal ways of protecting country, the Western Australian and Federal Governments still make decisions that do not take into account climate change science.

But the Western Australian Government must protect the future, by protecting the environment from any further harm, our lives depend upon it, if only you cared enough to read the science.

I know that in Western Australia the effects of climate change are yet to be felt, but all over the world, tipping points caused by climate change are being passed, never to be reversed.

Although amendments to the EPA Act may not seem relevant to global climate change, they are. It is essential that the Western Australian State Government stop prioritising development, and start prioritising conservation, and EPA Act amendments that protect country have the potential to send the message that the Western Australian State Government at least, listens to the science on climate change, and acts accordingly, unlike the Morrison Government which is still ignorantly supporting the Murdoch agenda that there is no climate change, and so mouths platitudes to pretend to care.

And care is what we really need from governments.

We need to know that the Western Australian Government cares enough about us, people, who will suffer if the amendments give way to corporate pressure.

Simply put, there are a number of areas where I believe the Act needs to be clearer about conservation and protection of native species and threatened ecological communities (TECs).

In particular:

- clearing of any land cannot proceed if it is at variance with any of the stated Clearing Principles;
- clearing in TECs must be disallowed entirely;
- there must be put in place, maximum protection for Priority Species;
- more funding support for taxonomists to formally evaluate and describe the thousands of unpublished taxa;
- establish a right of appeal process to EPA determinations;
- abolish the use of offsets or strongly tighten up the use so any offsets are of equivalent ecological value.

Our remaining ecosystems are under a range serious threats - clearing and climate change perhaps the most aggressive.

I believe The Act must be upgraded to afford maximum protection to country to protect WA's unique species, communities and ecosystems.