

Statement of Concern

I am seriously concerned by the reforms proposed in the Productivity Commission's interim report Investing in Cheaper, Cleaner Energy and the Net-Zero Transformation (2025). These changes are being pitched to the public as a positive step forward to improving efficiency, however they would absolutely leave our wildlife and environment vulnerable and at serious risk, something which the current law and constitution held in place for many years now in Australia has strength in preventing further environmental erosion.

The EPBC Act 1999 remains one of Australia's most robust frameworks for safeguarding threatened and endangered species and the habitats that sustain them. Its strong protections are essential for preserving our nation's unique biodiversity. Diluting these safeguards would undermine decades of scientific and community-driven effort and could erode public confidence in the legislation.

Key reasons why the EPBC Act should **remain unchanged—AND be strengthened**:

1. **Scientific Rigor:** The Act's rigorous assessment process ensures that any development projects are evaluated against the best available ecological data. Yet we constantly see this overridden and ignored.
2. **Social License:** Australians expect their government to prioritize environmental matters over short-term industrial gains. Weakening the Act would jeopardize that trust, which is disappearing very fast.
3. **Long-Term Economic Value:** Healthy ecosystems underpin sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and fisheries; protecting them is an investment in our future prosperity. Without this Australia has nothing.
4. **International Obligations:** The world currently views Australia as a country who protects and cares about their wildlife and environment, these values currently align with the Act. The world is watching at how Australia responds to environmental decision, the recent shooting of over 1100 koalas in Budj Bim NP, Victoria and the backlash that received from people around the world is a prime example.
5. **Introducing fast-track or "priority" pathways for major projects aligned with Net-Zero goals –** These would allow certain projects to avoid the full assessment process required under the EPBC Act, leaving economic and energy-transition objectives to override environmental due diligence.
6. **Creation of a centralized delivery agency or a Coordinator-General –** By concentrating approval authority in a single body, the reforms aim to accelerate project timelines at the expense of independent, evidence-based decision-making.
7. **Expansion of bilateral agreements to devolve decision-making to the states –** While ostensibly reducing duplication, this shift risks fragmenting protection standards and weakening the national oversight required for matters of genuine national environmental significance.
8. Collectively, these proposals amount to a deliberate dismantling of the core provisions that ensure scientific rigor, procedural fairness, and compliance with Australia's international environmental obligations. They are not neutral administrative tweaks; they constitute a direct challenge to:
9. Part 3 of the EPBC Act, which delineates the scope of matters of national environmental significance; Sections 136 and 391, which prescribe mandatory decision-making frameworks and enforce rigorous assessment standards; and The public participation, transparency, and standing provisions that underpin the Act's legitimacy and democratic accountability.

We are already witnessing the erosion of legal protections, been in place for years now, to ensure the very elements that define this country remain safe & respected – our environment and wildlife. These were put in place to ensure environmental decisions are made with integrity, independence and in line with Australia's international obligations. This is a such a critical proposal by the government for Australia, yet the majority of Australian's would have no idea. We, the taxpayers of Australia, demand our voices to be heard via a referendum on this.

If adopted, these reforms would significantly weaken the legal protections that safeguard biodiversity, Australia's heritage and healthy ecosystems. They would further limit opportunities for genuine community input and our voices to be heard and further than already see constraints on our courts and regulators to enforce accountability.

Policymakers, stakeholders, and all Australians must insist on strong, enforceable safeguards that uphold the very reason why the EPBC Act was put in place many years ago. We must ensure the push toward net-zero does not come at the expense of Australia's wildlife and environment.

Given these considerations, I believe any proposal that places industry interests ahead of our precious biodiversity is unacceptable. If there is genuine intent to reform the EPBC Act, it should be done transparently, with extensive public consultation, and—if necessary—subject to a national referendum.

I respectfully ask that you **oppose any amendment that weakens the EPBC Act** and instead implement measures that reinforce its protective provisions and place an immediate STOP on renewable projects which are ignoring the current EPBC laws and guidelines and destroying our wildlife and environment. This is unAustralian.

Yours sincerely

Dee Smith