

17/04/2020

Dear Professor Samuel and Independent Review Panel,

We wish to make a submission to the 2019-2020 Independent Review of the Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), on behalf of Citizens' Climate Lobby Australia and our 3,000 plus members nation-wide.

Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) is a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots advocacy and education organisation, focused on advancing climate change solutions through democracy. Many of our members have joined us because they are concerned for humanity's future and the planet our children will inherit. CCL exists to demonstrate there is sufficient political will to bring climate change to the forefront of our environmental protection laws.

The Commonwealth of Australia's most recent State of the Environment report shows that most indicators of environmental health are in decline. The verdict has been the same every five years since the first report was published in 1996. The latest 2016 report<sup>[1]</sup> acknowledges:

“Climate change is an increasingly important and pervasive pressure on all aspects of the Australian environment. It is altering the structure and function of natural ecosystems, and affecting heritage, economic activity and human wellbeing. Evidence shows that the impacts of climate change are increasing, and some of these impacts may be irreversible.”

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<sup>1</sup> State of the Environment Report, 2016 <<https://soe.environment.gov.au/>>.

More recent findings highlight this continuing trend. The State of the Climate Report for Australia projects increasing sea and air temperatures, more extreme weather events, sea level rises, ocean acidification, and shifts in rainfall<sup>[2]</sup>. While the full extent of climate change impacts on the environment is difficult to determine, the CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology indicate these changes can have a very significant impact on ecosystems, and that widespread ecological damage is likely unavoidable.

Australia continues to experience a significant rise in environmental destruction – from widespread deforestation and mass land clearing, to the opening up of extensive new coal mines and gas fields. All of which accelerate climate change and threaten the health and livelihoods of local communities.

The EPBC Act makes no mention, nor does it attempt to deal with the escalating problem of climate change. Without considerable reform, the overarching threat of climate change effectively dwarfs the scope of the Act and renders it inadequate and impuissant.

We seek reform of the EPBC Act to ensure our unique natural environment continues to be enjoyed by generations to come. Our asks for the EPBC Act include:

1. Clear mechanisms that automatically trigger national and international responses in addressing the actual causes of climate change and associated environmental threats. With its processes essentially science-based, the Act can be amended and significantly strengthened to ensure ecological sciences and climate science work together in addressing the macro-systemic climate issues.
2. Through the Climate Change Authority, or similar body, ecological concerns can be aggregated with climate issues. This should require the Federal Government to implement all necessary controls on greenhouse gas emissions, land-clearing and other contributors to climate change and related ecological damage.

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<sup>2</sup> State of the Climate Report, 2018 <<http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/>>.

3. The Chief Scientist and the Climate Change Authority, or similar body, should be empowered to require a policy response (e.g. carbon pricing) from the Government to address the root causes of climate change and ecological damage.
4. Inclusion of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions in the matters of national environmental significance, so an assessment process is triggered for all developments, wherever emissions exceed a science-based threshold.
5. Other such science-informed mechanisms must also recommend the repeal or reform of all policies that directly or indirectly contribute to climate change and related ecological damage; including, but not limited to, fossil fuel subsidies, land use laws, and wetland reclamation.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission. If needed, we can be reached at [info@ccl.org.au](mailto:info@ccl.org.au).

Yours sincerely,

Rod Mithcell  
National Chair

Jordan Hodgson  
Head of the EPBC Act Review Project