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**Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

By email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Friday 18 January 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Senate Inquiry into the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Retaining Federal Approval Powers) Bill 2012*

Central West Environment Council (CWEC) is an umbrella organization representing conservation groups and individuals in central west NSW working to protect the local environment for future generations.

This region was the first inland area of Australia to be developed for broad scale agriculture. The level of clearing of native vegetation over a long period of time has caused significant impacts on the region's biodiversity.

Central West NSW contains a large number of species populations and ecological communities threatened with extinction and listed as matters of national environmental significance. The region also contains areas of international significance such as the Ramsar listed Macquarie Marshes.

CWEC believes it is of the utmost importance that the Federal Government maintains the necessary powers to make approval decisions on developments likely to impact on significant biodiversity assets in this region.

Ongoing loss of the critically endangered ecological community, Grassy Box Woodland, is an important example where Federal Government input has required improved biodiversity offset arrangements than those proposed by the NSW Government.

The Federal Government should not be able to divest its approval powers to the states. This power should be removed from the EPBC Act.

CWEC supports the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Retaining Federal Approval Powers) Bill 2012.

Australia's unique biodiversity assets need to be protected into the long term. This bill provides certainty that the Federal Government will maintain its powers to carry out this important national responsibility.

Yours sincerely

Bev Smiles
Secretary