

To: [Committee, EC \(SEN\)](#)

Subject: my objection to the EPBCA (Standing) Bill 2015 for your consideration, please

Date: Thursday, 27 August 2015 4:40:01 PM

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To the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications,

As an everyday citizen who cares deeply about protecting our environment and its vital flora and fauna for generations to come, I'm getting in touch with you to let you know I am opposed to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Standing) Bill 2015 and ask that you recommend this Bill not be passed.

I do not support this Bill's aim of stopping the public and groups from accessing the courts to review the legality of major projects and government decisions, and to uphold environmental laws where the Government fails to do so.

Our wildlife and landscapes cannot represent themselves in court. Giving them a voice through groups and individuals who are concerned on their behalf, as well as that of future generations, is vitally important, and 'Public interest litigation' is a welcome and well-recognised part of our legal system.

The ability to access the courts should not be restricted to groups or individuals whose private property is impacted by a project as this Bill suggests. When vested interests are at stake, having an unbiased representation is a sensible and measured way to keep critical checks and measures in place.

Being able to bring legal cases in the public interest recognises that the public still care about the future of places like the Great Barrier Reef or species such as the koala despite not living right next door to a development or mine, or having private interests impacted.

I respectfully state my belief that the Attorney General is wrong when he suggests that environment groups are waging 'lawfare' on economic developments. Out of 5,500 projects since the provision was placed in the Act, only 22 have ever been challenged in court and only 2 projects have ever been stopped as a result of a court case.

We need to be strengthening environmental laws and not weakening them. We should be empowering people to protect the natural world for generations to come. Keeping the option available for all concerned individuals to have a voice in a measured and respectful way such as through the legal process is surely a basic right we can all count on in a democracy. I feel that the proposed bill is an attack on democracy and on the individual legal rights of all Australians. Not only that, but it will set back Australian environmental law many decades.

The result of such an amendment will be the unimpeded and ongoing destruction of Australia's already diminishing wildlife and wild places. And once wildlife has gone, it has gone forever.

Is that really the world in which we want to live? I hope not. It's certainly not the vision I have for our future.

Thank you for your consideration.