

Climate Action Network Australia
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13 October 2022

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Dear Committee members,

Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications on the proposed climate trigger in the *Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

Climate Action Network Australia (CANA) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the submission process to amend the *Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to include a climate trigger. CANA is a member based organisation made up of over 150 climate-focused civil society organisations advocating for Australia's rapid transition to a zero-emissions country.

The *Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999* was introduced to help protect Australia's unique natural places, plants and animals. However, the Act is not meeting its aims of protecting the environment and conserving biodiversity. Australia is currently recognised as a global hotspot for land clearing. As such, the Act is in need of deep and extensive reforms to ensure that it is delivering on its aims moving forward.

Additionally, the Act has failed to include the impacts of climate change on matters of national environmental significance such as the Great Barrier Reef as part of the assessment process. This is despite strong scientific evidence that links human induced climate change as a key threat to the loss of biodiversity. After a decade of inaction, Australia has now set a target to reduce emissions by 43% by 2030 and then towards net zero emissions by 2050. These emissions reduction targets and the rate at which they are achieved needs to be informed by the best available science. It also needs to be consistent with Australia's commitments under the Paris Agreement to limit average global temperature rise to below 2°C and then less than 1.5°C.

To achieve the emissions reductions necessary while protecting our natural heritage, providing clean water, air and environment for all Australians, Australia needs to do more with our national environment protection law. The proposal to amend the *Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999* is

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important and a welcomed step. This will help link Australia's emissions reductions targets with environmental impact assessment and decision making. And, most importantly, with the Matters of National Significance.

As part of the proposed amendment, CANA urges the Senate to consider the following;

1. That the decision maker considers the impacts of Scope 3 emissions on environment and biodiversity as part of the assessment process;
2. That the decision maker considers emissions from all projects in-light of Australia's 43% emissions reductions target and Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement;
3. That the decision maker takes into consideration the best available science when it comes to minimising environmental and climate impacts.

As noted above, amending the *Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999* to include a climate trigger is a welcomed first step. However, there are a range of broader reforms needed to the Act to ensure that it is fit for purpose when it comes to protecting Australia's unique animals, plants, landscapes and seascapes.

We look forward to working with the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications on amendments to the *Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999*. We would welcome the opportunity to present to the committee the details of the points made above.

Sincerely,

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Climate Action Network Australia

