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Parliament of Australia

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Submission: The Australia's faunal extinction crisis

It is the responsibility of all levels of government in Australia to do all that is possible to prevent the extinction of native Australian flora and fauna. All levels of government are failing in this endeavour. In particular Liberal/National party governments are mostly implicated in this failure. This is because coalition governments support tree clearing, unsustainable farming practices, mining and fossil fuel companies and big business and see the environment as a resource to plunder. Governments actively pursue policies that will drive species to extinction and examples of this neglect include: -

- Support for coal projects such as Adani that will drive local species to extinction, help to destroy the great barrier reef and turbo charge climate change.
- Support for coal seam gas projects which clear land, isolate forest communities contaminate groundwater, cause land subsidence and release spurious methane emissions with 25 times the greenhouse potential.
- Support for irrigators in the Murry Darling over the environment in particular large agrobusiness which are illegally or legally stealing water and government funding after initially being granted free water rights. The water in rivers should belong to the environment, not the farmers and crops such as cotton should not be grown.
- Support for land clearing in NSW and Queensland which is reducing native habitat including in Endangered Ecologic Communities and causing wind and water erosion and sedimentation and nutrification in rivers and the ocean including the great barrier reef. Land clearing results in unsustainable land use with farms being abandoned when topsoil blows away and deep erosion gullies criss-cross farms making them unusable as can be seen west of Emerald in Queensland.
- NSW Roads and Maritime Services destroying koala habitat at Wardell in order to provide the most-costly, longest and flood prone route when compared to the existing Pacific Highway route. The only ones to benefit here were the multinational contractors who got to receive the largest amount of taxpayer's funds.
- Reduction in the area of marine parks by coalition governments even though they were formed following intensive scientific study and community consultation and had already demonstrated an increase in species diversity and numbers which would also benefit commercial and recreational fishers.
- A reluctance by mainly coalition governments to tackle the greatest threat to biodiversity in Australia which is climate change. The government supports coal, gas and oil exploration and mining when anyone with any scientific understanding realises that this not only causes local extinctions but will also threaten our survival. The

government has not committed to renewable energy for electricity or transport and senior coalition politicians have been shown to have numerous links to fossil fuel companies.

- Adoption of free trade deals which allow foreign companies to sue our government if our environment laws prevent them from exploiting our environment.
- Privatising of power stations, transmission lines and energy providers which take decisions on conversion to sustainable energy out of the hands of government and push up power prices for consumers.
- Loss of farm environmental extension officers that over time could have shifted farms to more sustainable land management. Sustainable farm management would help to drought proof farms, store carbon, reduce chemical use and improve water quality while increasing farm profits in the long term. Governments that prop up unsustainable farming practices are wasting taxpayer's money while not assisting farmers to learn and adapt.
- Lack of government funding for environmental restoration projects such as riparian and wetland restoration necessary to improve water quality and fish stocks which would also improve fishing and tourism.
- Lack of strong and enforced environmental laws and regulations.
- Improper influence by politicians exercised over informed scientific decisions and planning taken by government departments. Scientific reports which do not support government policy are mothballed, comment silenced and anyone that speaks out may have their job threatened. Decisions should not be made by politicians, rather politicians should rely on advice from departments.

The examples above represent just a few of the reasons that we are facing an extinction crisis. Inaction by past and current governments and policies designed to destroy biodiversity will not improve the situation. Until voters install governments that prioritise the environment and support the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) the extinction crisis will only get worse.

Yours, Sincerely

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