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SUBMISSION

Nature Positive Bills

Environment East Gippsland (EEG) inc has been advocating for nature protection for over 40 years. We are supported by hundreds of members from both our region and further afield. Our Social media reach is over 12,000.

We have been very active in trying to protect East Gippsland's forests and its wildlife. Sadly, over 43 years of campaigning, surveying and more recently taking legal action, thousands of hectares of old growth forests, critical habitats, rainforests and a rich diversity of wildlife have been lost. This has been due to clearfelling forests, political collusion, industry influences and since 1997, supported by the Federal Government through the RFA exemptions from the EPBC Act.

EEG strongly believes this must never be allowed to happen again under any guise, and the restoration of forests and habitats must be seriously supported by unambiguous Commonwealth legislation, a strong and ruthless/fearless regulatory body, and a genuine will from government to reverse Australia's shocking degradation of biodiversity.

More species are endangered weekly and some like the Glossy Black Cockatoo are on the brink of extinction. There are only 30-40 remaining in Victoria. These are still threatened with being wiped out by careless state government agencies.

EEG supports a **well-resourced** National Regulator such as the proposed EPA.

But an EPA:

- must have **strong powers** and more importantly be **independent**.
- must be **accountable** and have a **board** rather than one CEO.
- board must have **suitably qualified members** with environmental and/or climate science credentials.
- needs to **take complaints seriously** - not fob them off.
- must have **strong legislation** to allow enforcement of environmental protections, via a **strengthened EPBC Act**.
- must be well-resourced to carry out its task. Australia is seeing the anti-corruption commissions **rendered ineffective** due to the old tactic of **under-resourcing**.

EEG supports a **rapid review and strengthening of the EPBC Act** in tandem with the establishment of the EPA.

Although a shiny new bureaucracy will be pointless if it only has a **broken EPBC Act** to enforce.

An effective EPBC Act should:

- take into account the **Samuel Review recommendations**.
- embed serious **climate impact considerations and actions**.
- **abolish RFA exemptions**.
- be **strongly worded** to ensure threatened species and their habitats have **effective protections**.
- Contain **no loopholes** that favour extractive industries and developers.

All of these must be achieved with a **set timeline**.

The **anger** we are hearing from supporters, caring people and voters-to-be is **increasing every year**. People in general are running out of patience. Government **spin and excuses only increase the outrage**. Extinctions are escalating beyond tolerance. There must be **no more excuses or delays**.

Increasing spin doctors employed by governments will **not solve the problems**.

It's been over five years since the Samuel Review. **No more kicking the can down the road** while whistling dixie.

Transparency will be key in all areas being proposed.

Decisions must:

- be **detailed and made public.**
- be able to be **scrutinised and challengeable.**
- be based on **credible science and evidence**
- not **'swap' or 'offset' rather than protect**
- not **pander to political donors**
- have **input from a qualified board**, not one government appointed CEO.

Political delays and influences are killing nature.

Big money from developers, mining and logging industries is causing massive losses to Australia's uniquely evolved biodiversity.

These new bills are our **last opportunity to halt the influences and reverse losses.**

Jill Redwood
Coordinator