

**PYRENEES**  
SHIRE



17 January, 2013

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

ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Madam or Sir,

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

The Pyrenees Shire Council welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Retaining Federal Approval Powers) Bill 2012.*

The Pyrenees Shire is a very productive agricultural region approximately 160km NW of Melbourne, Victoria. This area is renowned for its cereal and hay crops, wool, viticulture and forestry activity along with areas of National, State and Regional parks, all contributing to the region's economy. The current process identified by the EPBC Act allows for assessment and planning decisions to be made at a State level which ensures that these decisions are made by the relevant people within the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The Pyrenees Shire Council is committed to protecting and where possible enhancing environmental values within its area of responsibility. The most efficient and effective way of achieving this is to reduce the number of layers and steps involved when submitting a proposal for review and approval. Considerable time and effort goes into providing information, receiving feedback, developing strategies, formulating a submission and negotiating a final outcome. This process can become very cumbersome the more layers and organisations that are involved. The Pyrenees Shire Council has the view that it is much more efficient to liaise on a local level where relevant staff can visit the site and gain firsthand knowledge and a detailed explanation of the proposal. Any issues or concerns can be discussed readily with both parties having a sound knowledge and understanding of the situation allowing rational and logical decisions to be made.

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The other important aspect of having local contacts with authority is the turnaround time for decision making. Often it is critical to make swift decisions to keep local communities interested and businesses focused on core values. Community interest will soon decline with time delays and indecisive decision making.

From the Shire perspective the more streamlined this process can be made the more efficient and effective it can deliver its programs to the local community, business and tourism interests. The Council believes that if the Federal government has the ability to delegate its authority to the States then more efficient and effective outcomes will be achieved in a shorter time frame. This will not necessarily result in inferior outcomes as locals have a genuine affinity for the area and will be striving for the best possible outcome for all concerned.

### **Recommendation**

The Pyrenees Shire Council recommends the Federal government retains its ability to delegate its authority to the states where this delegation is appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Leach  
Director Assets & Development

