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

By email to: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

4 April 2013

Dear Ms Dunstone

Re: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013

Humane Society International (HSI), the world's largest conservation and animal welfare organisation, welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Senate inquiry on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013 (the Bill), on behalf of 11 million supporters worldwide and 50,000 Australian supporters.

As you will no doubt be aware from previous submissions to the Committee, HSI has a long standing interest in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). We also have long standing concerns about the impacts of mining activities on Australia's water resources and that to date these have not been able to be considered within the remit of the EPBC Act.

HSI strongly supports the Bill which provides for a ninth matter of national environmental significance, a 'water trigger' under the EPBC Act. We also support the amendments proposed by Tony Windsor MP in the House of Representatives, which seek to ensure that any approval bilateral agreements agreed in the future will not apply to this new matter of national environmental significance, meaning that approval powers for the water trigger will not be handed over to State and Territory Governments.

HSI is concerned however, that the scope of the Bill as currently drafted is too restrictive in its coverage. We would therefore like to see the Bill extended to cover other forms of mining activities, which may also have a significant impact on Australia's water resources.

HSI urges the Committee to ensure that the Bill include a specific requirement to 'not act inconsistently with' all relevant international treaties, and in particular the Convention on Biological Diversity. This would be in line with the treatment given to the majority of the other matters of national environmental significance.

HSI is strongly of the view that the Commonwealth Government must play a leadership role on matters of national environmental significance. We therefore believe that decisions

on approvals for *all* matters of national environmental significance should be protected from being handed over to State and Territory Governments. We believe that this Bill provides an ideal opportunity to remove the provision for approval bilateral agreements from the Act and strongly urge the Committee to support this.

Yours sincerely
Alexia Wellbelove
Senior Program Manager