



## The Hon Tony Burke MP

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Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

C11/3470

The Hon John Murphy MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

- 9 MAY 2011

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 30 March 2011 concerning the submission of a petition regarding cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park. I regret the delay in responding.

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) protects matters of national environmental significance, including National Heritage places, threatened species and ecological communities, among others. The Alpine National Park is a part of the Australian Alps National Park and Reserves National Heritage Listed Place and also contains a number of threatened species and ecological communities listed under the EPBC Act.

I must meet my statutory responsibilities under the EPBC Act to protect matters of national environment significance. In addition to my statutory responsibilities, I believe cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park sets a dangerous precedent for the management of National Parks across Australia. This move represented an extraordinary backward step in protection in a National Park.

I note that the former Victorian Government removed cattle from the Alpine National Park some years ago as a result of concerns over their environmental impact. The Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment did not notify my department or refer the cattle grazing for assessment and approval under the EPBC Act prior to the re-introduction of cattle to the Alpine National Park.

The department has undertaken a compliance review to evaluate the risks posed by cattle grazing to the environment in the Alpine National Park. I personally inspected cattle damage to areas of the Alpine National Park with officers of the department on 25 February 2011 as a part of that review. Based on the results of the review I was not satisfied with the risks posed to matters of national environmental significance and I formally requested that the cattle be removed from the Alpine National Park by 8 April 2011. I am advised that the cattle have now been removed from the park.

I am also aware that Mr Bandt has introduced the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (Abolition Of Alpine Grazing) Bill 2011 in relation to grazing in the Alpine National Park.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Tony Burke