

Dissenting Report by Labor Senators

1.1 Labor is committed to reducing unnecessary red tape and we have always taken a sensible approach to reducing red tape. In Government, Labor abolished more than 16 000 Acts and legislative instruments. We lowered business costs by \$4 billion each year as part of our Seamless National Economy reforms.

1.2 Regulations play an important role in ensuring the Australian economy, environment and society remains stable and sustainable. Regulation and legislation also protect consumers and the community, as well as promoting fair trade and competition by describing the rights of businesses and business owners when conflicts arise.

1.3 Environmental regulations exist to make sure development is appropriate and sustainable while keeping our fragile environment healthy for future generations. Environment regulation also protects Australia's cultural and heritage sites. They give business clarity and provide a framework for decision-making by government and business.

1.4 The EPBC Act was introduced by the Howard Government and is a well-established regulation that has been applied by both Labor and the conservatives. It is the reason that world heritage properties such as the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru-Kata Tjuta are protected. It is the reason national heritage sites such as the Kimberley and Great Ocean Road are protected. The EPBC Act also means wetlands of international importance are not drained and threatened species such as Blue Whales, Flatback Turtles and Koalas are protected.

1.5 The Water Trigger in the EPBC Act means that the impact of coal seam gas development and large coal mining development on Australia's precious water resources is carefully considered.

1.6 Labor Senators note that the EPBC Act is being reviewed in 2019 as per section 522A of the Act and preliminary work by the Department of the Environment and Energy has begun. While we disagree with a number of the recommendations in the Chair's report, this statutory review should consider opportunities to reduce regulatory burden, including those identified in Recommendations 9, 13, 14 and 15 of the Chair's report.

Senator Murray Watt

Deputy Chair

