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## Animal Protectors Alliance response to EPBC Draft Amendment Bill

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Standards and Assurance) Bill 2021 put before Parliament in late February ignores the recommendations from the independent review of our environment laws. Those recommendations were far from likely to actually improve the chances of Australia surviving as a habitable continent, but, if implemented, they may have marginally slowed the current slide into a major extinction event. The draft Bill would do nothing but hasten the catastrophe.

We refer you to the detailed joint submission by the Animal Protectors Alliance, the Australian Wildlife Protection Council and Animal Liberation ACT (full text of submission can be found at: [https://animalprotectors.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Environmental\\_Protection\\_Biodiversity\\_Conservation\\_Act\\_Review\\_APA\\_Submission\\_April\\_2020.pdf](https://animalprotectors.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Environmental_Protection_Biodiversity_Conservation_Act_Review_APA_Submission_April_2020.pdf).)

In particular, we reiterate the following points made in our joint submission:

- given the global biodiversity crisis, the necessity that Australian biodiversity in its entirety be fully and consistently protected;
- the critical importance to biodiversity of protecting wildlife habitat throughout Australia;
- the sentience of all animals, including both native and naturalised animals, and the consequential ethical imperative of protecting them from anthropogenic harm;
- the clauses under the current Act which permit the Minister to make decisions which harm biodiversity or ecological processes;
- that only by being ecologically sustainable can economic or social development be sustainable (ie the meaning of ESD according to the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development);
- the inevitable counterproductive outcomes of the concept of "environmental offsets";
- the importance of having appropriate indicative data to guide government decision making;
- the catastrophic environmental impacts of wholesale killing (eg "harvesting", "culling") of native animals (eg kangaroos);
- the different but equally serious environmental impacts of wholesale killing of fast breeding naturalised animals (eg rabbits, cats, pigs etc);
- the potential environmental risks of eradicating (should it ever be possible) naturalised animals without a complete understanding of the niches they have inherited and the ecological services they now provide;



- the demonstrable link between animal abuse and human health (eg through unsanitary killing conditions; or through loss of habitat leading to overcrowding of wild animals and/or closer contact with humans; or through deliberate overcrowding in intensive production facilities).

While we made many detailed recommendations in our original submission, here is a summary of the essential aspects.

- The EPBC Act should explicitly identify Australian biodiversity in its entirety as a Matter of National Environmental significance. This will unambiguously transfer responsibility for the enforcement of protection of all Australian biodiversity to the Commonwealth.
- All State and Territory environmental jurisdiction should be subject of Commonwealth oversight and enforcement. Under no circumstances should environmental powers already ceded to the Commonwealth be given back to the States who have already proven themselves incapable of wreaking anything but havoc and catastrophe on Australia's environment.
- The Commonwealth Environment Minister's power to make any decision on any basis other than to protect biodiversity and ecological sustainability should be removed from the EPBC Act.
- The EPBC Act should include a clause which quotes the definition of Ecologically Sustainable Development from the already nationally agreed NSESD.
- Any development or activity that is not ecologically sustainable should be explicitly unlawful under the EPBC Act.
- Any mention of "environmental offsets" should be omitted from the EPBC Act.
- The EPBC Act should recognise that animals are sentient beings and entitled to protection from all forms of anthropogenic harm.
- The EPBC Act should prohibit all further destruction of biodiversity habitat for any reason (eg by agriculture, road building, urban expansion, logging or mining), with only a few, unambiguous and rigorously worded exemptions.
- The EPBC Act should prohibit all further direct killing of native animals for any reason (eg "harvesting" or "culling" or "recreation") other than euthanasia of individuals that have been expertly identified as already mortally sick or injured.
- The EPBC Act should prohibit all exclusion of native animals, by fencing or other measures, from their natural range and native habitat.
- The EPBC Act should authorise the reclamation and return to ecological sustainability of land that has been degraded by human activity (eg introduced agriculture).



- Since "sustained lethal control" of fast-breeding naturalised animals guarantees larger and more fertile populations of these animals in perpetuity, the EPBC Act should prohibit killing these animals in favour of less cruel and more effective measures.
- The EPBC Act should mandate the collection and analysis of data that are capable of informing wise environmental decision-making.