

To whom it may concern,

The review of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 is an excellent opportunity to bring the principles of this legislation into the modern era, and strengthen protection for biodiversity. However, the risk of weakening the legislation is also apparent, and could damage biodiversity for many decades to come. This concerns me, as I am currently studying for a career in this field.

The inclusion of goals and targets for restoration, enhancement, biodiversity, and critical habitat are a step in the right direction. These targets should include strategies and management plans that are subject to regular review, encouraging responsiveness to changes in environment. They should also be enforced under the legislation, and complied to by all public authorities. Urban ecological communities should also be recognised, protected and enhanced through this legislation, encouraging connection to nature, and understanding of the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem functions amongst our growing urban populations. This will help shape healthier urban environments into the future.

There is a definite need for more large-scale objectives and management, but this must not come at the expense of protections for individual species. In particular, losing the requirement for the creation of action plans for all threatened species will be detrimental. As a student in conservation and land management, these action plans have proven an invaluable resource in my education and understanding of the issues facing species and ecological communities. Action plans can help inform management practices and objectives, as well as the general public. Similarly, the 'guarantee' component of the legislation cannot be removed. Although the likelihood of preventing all species and ecological communities from extinction is low, removal of the guarantee subtracts from both public and private perception of the importance placed on protecting biodiversity, and encourages lower standards.

Adoption of IUCN listing criteria will strengthen listings, but may not be enough unless audits are regular, and continue to reflect changes in ecosystem and species diversity. A ten year audit period is too lengthy and many threatened species and communities will slip through the cracks.

Penalties for offenders should indeed be tiered to better accommodate enforcement, but if any industry or stakeholder group is given exemptions, the legislation will be severely undermined, and its protection of biodiversity significantly weakened. Furthermore, I believe that even with enforced penalties, some offenders will be willing to pay the fine and continue destructive practices. Education and involvement of offenders in restoring damaged communities and protecting threatened species should be incorporated in any penalties, to reduce the risk of repeat offences.

Finally the proposed recognition of Traditional Owners is long overdue, but could potentially be of great benefit to both biodiversity protection and Aboriginal communities if it goes a little further. Despite the extensive loss of knowledge and history since European settlement, many of Australia's First Peoples still hold a strong connection to nature through their

culture, and many forms of knowledge relevant to conservation survive in Aboriginal communities. Collaboration with and funding of Registered Aboriginal Parties in conservation efforts could empower both Aboriginal communities and environmental projects.

I hope that despite being rushed, the concerns I have raised in this submission to the review can be considered seriously, and that the new legislation will deliver better protection for biodiversity.