

25 March 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

Weakening nature laws would set a dangerous precedent and allow extinction

Climate Action Network Australia represents 160 organisations working collectively to protect Australians and our natural world by advancing climate action. Together we represent millions of Australians.

We write today to express our horror and outrage with the proposed amendments to weaken the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, and urge your Government to not proceed. The proposal would exempt one industry from proper environmental regulation despite the severe, direct damage being experienced today by the local community, plants and animals.

This is not only about the salmon industry – it sets a dangerous precedent that could be applied to coal, gas, and other destructive and polluting industries seeking to avoid proper environmental assessment.

Our environmental laws are broken and at the last election Labor committed to fix them. As a climate movement we have been advocating for many years for nature protection and climate pollution to be properly dealt with, given that 740 fossil fuel developments have been approved under the Act, and Australia's biodiversity continues to decline.

We have a number of critical concerns about the proposed changes to our nature protection laws:

1. The latest proposal would set an alarming precedent for other industries to push for polluting carve outs, which undermines the expressed purpose of the law. It could strip away the community's right to seek legitimate review of environmental decisions.
2. We are concerned about the likely species extinction of the endangered Maugean skate due to industrial activity. This is an ancient and unique creature only found in Macquarie Harbour. The skate itself is the representation of a specific Outstanding Universal Value of the site and a reason parts of Macquarie Harbour were added to the World Heritage Area list. To create a specific exemption for an industry that has demonstrably been devastating this World Heritage Area would be a most egregious example of environmental vandalism.
3. The undemocratic process has entirely bypassed public scrutiny prior to rushing these laws to Parliament.

4. First Nations peoples have long upheld cultural and totemic responsibilities to protect land, water, and species, including the endangered Maugean skate. Weakening community voice in environmental laws is an attack not just on biodiversity, but on the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

When your government took office it promised to strengthen national environmental laws and committed to no new extinctions. Instead, you failed to deliver the Nature Positive Plan, and this proposed amendment is a regressive step. You have not delivered on your promises.

For years, many of our organisations invested significant resources in the EPBC Act review process, only to see reforms shelved at the end of 2024. We will not stand by while nature protections are dismantled.

Genuine consultation leads to better outcomes and legislation. This is evident from the consultative approach this government took on climate reforms like the vehicle efficiency standards. In stark contrast, this proposed change bypasses democratic process entirely and its far-reaching consequences remain untested with stakeholders.

What will your climate and nature legacy be? The Albanese Government risks being remembered throughout history for driving the extinction of a globally unique species and forever degrading a World Heritage Area. How shameful it would be if the skate survived the extinction-level event that killed the dinosaurs, but was unable to survive your government.

We strongly urge you to reconsider the proposed amendments.

Yours sincerely,

Denise Cauchi, Interim CEO, Climate Action Network Australia

Kelly O'Shanassy, CEO, Australian Conservation Foundation

Amanda McKenzie, CEO, Climate Council Australia

Paul Gamblin, CEO, Australian Marine Conservation Society

Sam Szoke-Burke, Biodiversity Policy and Campaign Manager, Wilderness Society

David Ritter, CEO, Greenpeace Australia Pacific

Dermot O'Gorman, CEO WWF-Australia

Michelle Isles, CEO, Climate and Health Alliance

Arabella Douglas, CEO, Currie Country Social Change

Simon Copland, Executive Director, Conservation Council ACT Region

Kirsty Howey, Executive Director, Environment Centre NT

Coral Rowston, Director, Environmental Advocacy in Central Queensland

Hope Robins, CEO, Action for Dolphins

Jed Johnson, President, Climate Action Now Signs Incorporated

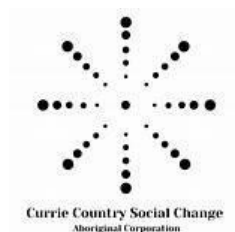
Amy Blain, Chair, Peoples Climate Assembly

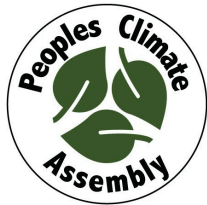
Peter Catt, Chair, Social Responsibilities Committee, Anglican Church SQ

Dr Corinne Ang, Chief Executive Officer, Asian Australians for Climate Solutions

Thea Ormerod, President, Australian Religious Response to Climate Change

Rob Eisenberg, Founder, Vote Earth Now
 Dr Bronwyn Greshan, CEO, Psychology for a Safe Climate
 Dr Kate Wylie, Executive Director, Doctors for the Environment Australia
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 Serena Joyner, CEO, Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action
 Shani Tager, Campaign Director, 350 Australia
 Alex Hill, Acting Chief Campaigns Officer, GetUp
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 Victoria McKenzie-McHarg, CEO, Women's Environmental Leadership Australia
 Rod Mitchell, Chair, Citizens' Climate Lobby
 Stefany Goldring, CEO, Vets for Climate Action
 John Englart, Convenor, Climate Action Merribek
 Extinction Rebellion Victoria
 Nic Seton, CEO, Parents for Climate
 Luke Fletcher, Executive Director, Jubilee Australia Research Centre
 Ann Sanson, Convenor, Darebin Climate Action Now
 Jacqui Mumford, CEO, Nature Conservation Council of NSW





Citizens' Climate Lobby



