Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment

Retaining Federal Approval Powers Bill 2012

Nita Clifton

I am making a submission because I am quite certain that handing over Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation to the State Governments will result in massive losses of our already severely depleted natural heritage and diversity.
I am also very keen that our precious native environments and the animals that live there are respected and nurtured by our community.

I refer to a recent experience in my local area.

A significant area of bush and rehabilitated land [by the local council with volunteer labour and various grant funding] was only saved after months of strong lobbying and community pressure from being turned into a dog park by 1 vote.
This happened as a result of a change in the Council with new councillors from outside of the immediate area who were very right wing and wanted to sell off the park in sections, calling those who care about the park “fanatics” and “greenies” and engaged in hurling insults rather than debating and considering the issue logically.

The state government was reluctant to intervene saying it was a council issue.
Good science, logical debate and previous engagements with volunteers and community groups were devalued.
There are endangered and protected animals in the park.
There is remnant bushland.
The park is widely used by the public.
All meant nothing.

It is my experience that local and small governments are dominated by minority strong opinion where the environment hangs on by a whisker only after good people are stressed and abused for months until they can get a result that benefits everyone who cares about their environment.
It is also my direct experience that most people fall into the category of wanting to preserve the environment and biodiversity we have left.

We need to keep a federal approach to protect our environment and biodiversity.

Next, consider the ongoing Murray River disaster.
Here we have local councils and state governments unable to act as a united group to keep our most important national river healthy and vibrant for both habitat and irrigation.
Self interest overrides all else as the river is viewed as one huge irrigation channel and little else in some areas.
No concern for the Coorong, a wetland of International significance, an environmentally healthy river system, or of down river users for food, recreation and water to live.

We need to keep a federal approach to protect our environment and biodiversity.

I have a superficial awareness about problems in the Margaret River area in WA regarding mining, problems in the Barrier Reef regarding shipping and mining and problems in Queensland about mining, particularly “fracking”.
The ongoing problems in Tasmania with logging old growth forests and ongoing clearing in Queensland also are concerning.

We need to keep a federal approach to protect our environment and biodiversity.

Local and state governments have proven time and time again that they are unable to think about the importance of their responsibilities to protect their local environments instead thinking that somehow this is being done by someone else somewhere.
Well it isn’t necessarily so.
No more relevant is the term, Think Globally, Act Locally than now.
Unfortunately the states have shown, that acting locally to protect what little there is left environmentally is not easy or likely to happen.
Too much looking for the next vote, too bereft of long term visions for a vibrant community that is friendly to the environment too, too easily in the pocket of big companies who can strip the land and pay up big, too little regard for the environment that struggles because it can’t churn out money money money.

Once biodiversity is lost it cannot be recovered.

Thank you.

Nita Clifton