The federal Labor government has previously considered Australia's environment to be of national importance. It was considered the responsibility of the Australian government to challenge State Premiers on their poor environmental decisions, which were influenced by the interests of mining and industry magnates.

In 1983, the Labor government successfully challenged the Tasmanian conservative government all the way to the High Court. This challenge saved the Franklin River. This was Labor's greatest environmental legacy, and extended far beyond the Franklin River – not only did the Federal government win the right to uphold Australia's international obligations to protect World Heritage sites, but they took the opportunity to put the environment squarely into the national arena.

National leadership on environmental issues, gave the Australian community momentum to rate the environment as second only to the economy in National importance in the 1990 election.

These gains now face the possibility of being destroyed by the current Labor government, backed by the Coalition, which shows both major parties have the same pathetic indifference regarding National environment protection.

By March next year the federal government intends to hand back its powers to approve mining projects and developments that affect matters of national environmental significance to self interested State and Territory governments. These matters include an ever increasing number of threatened species and World Heritage.

The consequences will be far reaching and disastrous for the environment. The so called Environment Minister, Tony Burke, is once again demonstrating he is a mere puppet within the government. He will give power grabbing Premiers ie. Campbell Newman and Barry O'Farrell sole power over approving developments that will be solely in the interests of big business. If a coalmine stands to destroy part of a Word Heritage site, or send ever increasing endangered species closer to extinction, a State Premier can approve it without the intervention of the Australian government. This is beyond comprehension.

The ALP government's plans have created so much alarm that last week Sir David Attenborough and Dr Bob Brown joined 31 other prominent naturalists in urging the Prime Minister not to fatally undermine environment protection in Australia and abandon our environment to the States, embracing the philosophy of grab the money and run.

The decision to hand over environment powers to the states was an ill considered judgment made after a meeting between the ALP government and the Business Council of Australia. The Business Council of course continues to claim that the environment is too regulated, and development is being held up. However, on all indicators our environment is clearly in decline. The threatened species list has nearly tripled in the past 20 years, as we lose more and more crucial habitat and biodiversity. Tim Flannery in the current *Quarterly Essay,* writes of the gathering second extinction wave, set to empty “vast swathes of the continent”. The evidence shows that the Australian environment is suffering from far too little protection, rather than too much.

Putting the States in charge of these crucial environmental decisions is nothing short of lunacy which will dramatically hasten this decline.

I, as one of many very concerned post war voters, forward this submission for earnest consideration for the future of all Australians, particularly our grandchildren. Do we want to be remembered as the generation that ‘pushed the planet to the point of no return’??