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18 January 2013

Re: John Renowden's views to the Senate regarding the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Retaining Federal Approval Powers) Bill 2012.*

Dear Senators,

I am 67 year old Australian who cares passionately about protecting our remaining flora and fauna. I have given over 40 years of voluntary work to help achieve this, and it has often amounted to a job on top of my normal job.

I am currently Secretary of the Australasian Wader Studies Group and was awarded Life Membership of the Victorian National Parks Association in October last year in recognition of many years of voluntary work done to help protect the environment. I am also a member of and support about 6 other conservation organisations, including doing voluntary bird surveys for Australian Bush Heritage and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy.

I do this to ensure that not only our children but all future generations will be able to enjoy and appreciate our unique and wonderful wildlife. There is nothing better than observing wildlife in its natural habitat.

Habitats are being degraded at an alarming rate all around the world. I am an ecologist by training and realise that it is absolutely imperative to protect our remaining habitats. If we don't protect the habitats, animals and plants will become extinct, irrespective of what the climate does.

Australia has the highest rate of mammal extinction of any continent in the world. It has lost 22 species of mammals in the last 200 years.

Have we learnt nothing?

You know as well as I do that if the Federal Government abrogates its environmental protection laws to the states, the process will continue at an accelerated pace. Put simply, the states have shown time and time again that they cannot be trusted when it is their responsibility to protect endangered species and critical or valuable habitats. They invariably give in to vested commercial interests.

I believe vehemently that you, as Senators, have a duty to stand up to the self-interested business groups, and state unequivocally that the Federal Government has a deeper responsibility to protect Australia's unique natural values for current and future generations.

It is pertinent to note that the proposed reforms were put forward via COAG's new Business Advisory Forum. Why should the views of such a vested interest group be allowed to ride roughshod over the best interests of the whole community? No such forum exists for any other

sector of the community.

I also strongly believe that in resisting the Business Advisory Group's pressure, you should cite the many instances where state governments have failed to fulfill their legal and moral obligations to properly protect the natural environment in their own states. They have failed to do this time after time, so they have absolutely no credibility.

Rather than enumerate the many arguments as to why it is absolutely critical that the Federal Government retain approval for environmental decisions I have attached the paper written by the Australian Network of Environmental Defender's Offices Inc., which summarises these arguments more succinctly than I can.

I trust that you, as Senators, will have the courage to come out strongly to protect our unique wildlife and the critical habitats on which they depend, both for now and into the future.

Yours sincerely

John Renowden