

Inquiry: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Retaining Federal Approval Powers) Bill 2012.

Submission from: Allan McKay

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Retaining Federal Approval Powers) Bill 2012 prevents the Commonwealth from handing its responsibilities for approving proposed actions that significantly impact matters protected under our national environmental laws to a State or Territory. It also prevents this Government, or any future Government, from handing its responsibilities for regulating nuclear activities to state or territory governments.

I strongly support the amendments to this bill.

Australia has many places of national and international significance that are rightly protected by the Commonwealth. This responsibility should not be delegated to other levels of government.

The Commonwealth has a responsibility to the world community, and to the whole nation. This umbrella of concern is not necessarily held by other levels of government. For example, successive Queensland Governments have already demonstrated an unwillingness to protect special places or precious water resources when economic advantage to the State is involved. Our underground water reserves of the Great Artesian Basin, our farming land, our coastal wetlands, our Great Barrier Reef, our wild rivers are all currently threatened by State and Local Governments. The reality is that parochial interests of States and Territories have failed to protect special places, special creatures and special ecosystems.

It is essential that the Commonwealth retain and exercise its responsibility in these matters.