

## Your details

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**Title**

Mrs

**First name**

Megan

**Last name**

Argent

## Submission details

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**I am making this submission as**

Other

**Submission type**

I am making a personal submission

**Consent to make submission public**

I give my consent for this submission to be made public

## Share your experience or tell your story

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**Your story**

Please refer to my prepared submission in the attached document below

Thankyou for the opportunity to enter my submission to the review. I live on the Georges River in Sydney and I am a volunteer for Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Rescue. My friends and family are spread over the NSW South Coast and it is a weekly trip for myself and my family. The grief and overwhelming sadness at the loss of our wildlife and our beautiful environment and for the loss of property and livelihood of people dear to me, is unparalleled in my lifetime.

This season's bushfires were predicted on numerous occasions by the RFS, CSIRO and a majority of our scientific community and were forecast in the Ross Garnaut's Climate Change Review [8]. They are directly linked to a culmination of environmental mismanagement and inaction on climate change. In addition to the scientific reports detailing these predictions, the warning of the imminent unprecedented bushfire season was to be discussed with our Prime Minister in April 2019 to table the preparation required to protect lives, property and livelihoods, but as is

gravely wanting in the EPBC Act, the lack of national leadership has never before been so apparent as now, and the Prime Minister did not attend the meeting. [9] Preventative measures need to be put in place within the EPBC Act to guard against harm to the environment and the public. This last bushfire season has taken 33 lives, over and above the lives of 1 billion native wildlife species and burnt 12.6 million hectares of land. A typical season in NSW would burn 300,000 hectares alone. These fires have exposed volunteers and Fire Brigade staff to toxic cancerous smoke on an unprecedented scale, as well as the 11.3 million members of the public including seniors, infants and respiratory-challenged. [10] As citizens, we have a “substantive right to a safe, clean and healthy environment” [6] and yet currently 3000 Australians die each year as a result of air pollution. [7]

The State of the Environment report calls for the necessity of a “national policy that establishes a clear vision for the protection and sustainable management of Australia’s environment to the year 2050” and “specific action programs and policy to preserve and, where necessary, restore natural capital and our unique environments, taking into account the need to adapt to climate change” In regards to Ecologically Sustainable Development we need to reinstate or introduce new Independent science based non-political institutions, like the NACCCP, and sufficiently fund them to better educate the public on ESD and to help mitigate climate change in light of scientific predictions. Indigenous Australians and the wealth of their cultural wisdom should be employed in all aspects of governance on the environment, this is for the benefit of all Australia. Indigenous communities should be engaged more effectively when implementing policy. [13]

After losing one third of its population in this year’s bushfire season in NSW alone, our iconic Koala is still not listed as endangered. Within the wake of this catastrophe, before a full impact assessment had been made and when there should have been a moratorium on logging, according to evidence gathered by Nature Conservation Council the NSW Government proceeded to clear prime Koala and threatened species habitat in the Styx River State Forest, large areas of which had been destroyed by the fires. Conservation groups confirm the prediction that Koalas in NSW and Queensland will be extinct by 2050. [21] Land clearing is driving our extinction crisis on an international scale. National Leadership is needed to enforce an overarching object of the EPBC Act as bilateral agreements are failing our environment and our wildlife.

Deforestation of our ecosystems has been shown to decrease rainfall by up to 30%. As per Wendy Seabrook of Learning from nature, simply put: trees make rain. They are a strategic way of drought proofing our environment. They hold water in the soil, they stop runoff, lower the temperature and the microbes and microparticles forest vegetation releases also contribute to cloud formation. [24] Our ecosystems generate healthy water resources which in turn generate income by farming and fisheries. Without these ecosystems the land dries up, causing drought and loss of livelihood, and it then burns on the grand scale we have seen in this last bushfire season. Conversion of ecosystems into farming and logging gives less economic value than is given when relying on ecosystems as a sustainable part of the production cycle. [25]

The fact is that our forest ecosystems also sequester carbon to protect us from the damaging effects of climate change. This is particularly so in the case of old growth Forest as deforestation releases this stored carbon into the atmosphere. Preventing further deforestation of native forests in south-east Australia is the equivalent of preventing emissions of 460 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> a year for the next 100 years [26]. \$2.55 billion dollars is spent on carbon abatement programs including planting trees to offset the rate of land clearing in Australia when by far the best approach would be not to clear the forests in the first place [27]. 35% of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are from past deforestation, 18% of annual emissions are from deforestation.[28]

In accounting “income is defined as the maximum amount that can be consumed in a given period without reducing the amount of possible consumption in a future period” (Hicks 1946) [29] Due to a lack of national Leadership there is a failure to create a sustainable long-term economic vision. The immediate financial profit in converting our capital assets through certain farming practices, clear-cut logging and mining is valued above long-term overall sustainable development and ecosystem management. Hence drought, fires and water shortages. From 2018 to 2019, Australian Tourism generated \$148.7 Billion [30]. The impact of the bushfires on Tourism has been insurmountable.

After losing one third of its population in this year’s bushfire season in NSW alone, our iconic Koala is still not listed as endangered. Within the wake of this catastrophe, before a full impact assessment had been made and when there should have been a moratorium on logging, according to evidence gathered by Nature Conservation Council the NSW Government proceeded to clear prime Koala and threatened species habitat in the Styx River State Forest, large areas of which had been destroyed by the fires. Logging in forests burnt by the fires was also done in the wake of the catastrophe this year, this makes forests more prone to bushfire, it can add decades on to the recovery of the forest, it affects wildlife. Tree ferns and other newly budding vegetation is decimated by heavy logging machinery, it stops the chance of tree species resprouting. Impacted wildlife depend on logs to provide shelter and it is a source of food for insects which are eaten by the wildlife. Fungi also grows on the logs providing food for bandicoots and

poteroos.[34]

I just have to add my commendation for the exceptional coverage by the ABC.

Thankyou

[1] Dr William Jackson Ms Alex Rankin State of the Environment 2016

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[2] Stephanie Brittain Why should we care about ethics in conservation?

<https://www.iccs.org.uk/blog/why-should-we-care-about-ethics-conservation>

[3] Nick Kilvert Think Australia's bushfires killed a lot of animals? Weak environmental laws threaten the lives of more <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2020-02-16/bushfire-wildlife-extinction-offsets/9622980>

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[5] Dr William Jackson Ms Alex Rankin State of the Environment 2016

<https://soe.environment.gov.au/theme/overview>

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[13] Australian Panel of Experts on Environmental Law, Blueprint for the Next Generation of Australian Environmental Law. P22. <http://apeel.org.au/>

[14] Anne Davies Illegal land clearing in NSW may be accelerating, complaints data suggests

The Guardian Tue 10 Jul 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jul/10/illegal-land-clearing-in-nsw-may-be-accelerating-complaints-data-suggests#maincontent>

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[16] Anne Davies Illegal land clearing in NSW may be accelerating, complaints data suggests

The Guardian Tue 10 Jul 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jul/10/illegal-land-clearing-in-nsw-may-be-accelerating-complaints-data-suggests#maincontent>

[17] Environmental Defenders Office The Independent Review of the EPBC Act Response to Discussion Paper: A summary for the community p22-24 <https://www.edo.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/200221-EPBC-Act-Review-Discussion-Paper-Responses-EDO-Community-Guide.pdf>

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Ecosystems AND HUMAN WELL-BEING A Report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment  
<http://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.356.aspx.pdf>

[26] Brendan Mackay Heather Keith, Sandra L. Berry, David B. Lindenmayer Green Carbon Part 1: The Role of Natural Forests in Carbon Storage P7

[27] Scientists' Declaration: Strong legislation needed to curb Australia's accelerating rate of land clearing  
<https://www.ecosoc.org.au/scientists-declaration-strong-legislation-needed-curb-australias-accelerating-rate-land-clearing>

[28] Brendan Mackay Heather Keith, Sandra L. Berry, David B. Lindenmayer Green Carbon Part 1: The Role of Natural Forests in Carbon Storage P7

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[30] Heather Cotching Daniel Gschwind Karen Halbert Lindsay Hermes Peter Shelley Tapas Strickland Dr Tony Webber Tourism Research Australia, Australian Government, Austrade TOURISM FORECASTS 2019  
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[34] David Lindenmayer, Doug Robinson March 2, 2020 Logging is due to start in fire ravaged forests this week. It's the last thing our wildlife needs. The Conversation <https://theconversation.com/logging-is-due-to-start-in-fire-ravaged-forests-this-week-its-the-last-thing-our-wildlife-needs-132347>

## Terms of Reference (optional)

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The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#).

### 1.1 Causes and contributing factors

## **Supporting documents or images**

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### **Attach files**

- Submission- comment to Bushfire enquiry Megan Argent.docx