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CRA expresses deep concern at the Federal Government's Weakening of our Nature Laws

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA), in an Open Letter to the Prime Minister, has expressed deep concern at the federal government's amendment to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity (EPBC) Act, which removes the right for third parties to request a review of project approvals when new information about environmental harm emerges.

This amendment was introduced by the federal government last night to stop a review by the federal Environment Minister of a prior approval for the Tasmanian salmon industry to extend into the Macquarie Harbour, in light of evidence that the activities of the industry are critically endangering the Maugean Skate fish species.

"We understand that the farmed salmon industry is a source of employment for local communities. At the same time, these changes to our nature laws risk preventing not only a review of the approval given to the Tasmanian salmon industry, but also future reviews of other destructive projects, for example new coal and gas projects. This is not acceptable," said Br. Gerard Brady CFC, CRA President.

"Pope Francis has emphasised the need for an "ecological economy," in which protection of the environment is integral to development activities. A proper review process of development approvals is integral to that," he added.

The EPBC Act underwent its second independent review in 2020, which found that the Act is not fit to address current or future environmental challenges, requiring "fundamental reform" to reverse the current state of environmental decline.

"While the Federal Government initially committed to improving the EPBC Act, earlier this year, it announced that it would not proceed to do so. Now this amendment can only be seen as a backwards step that will weaken our key piece of environmental legislation," said Anne Walker, CRA National Executive Director.

CRA also called for further safeguards to be added to the EPBC Act.

"It is also concerning that our national environment law currently does not mention climate change. In response to the climate crisis, the EPBC Act should include mandated consideration of climate risk when undertaking environmental assessments for new projects," Anne concluded.

[Read CRA's Open Letter.](#)

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