



MEDIA RELEASE

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CRA Calls for Overhaul of Environmental Laws

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) has urged the Federal Government to reconsider its proposed environmental law reforms in a recent submission to a Senate Inquiry into a package of Bills that seek to reform the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

CRA expressed deep concern that the Bills fall short of the reform of the Act that is needed to properly protect and restore Australia's diverse plants, animals and ecosystems, while acknowledging that some few components of the Bills demonstrate positive changes to the EPBC Act.

"A 2020 review of the EPBC Act deemed it ineffective in guiding sustainable development and in need of fundamental reform to halt significant damage to the environment. We fear that the currently proposed Bills do not go far enough towards this required overhaul," said CRA President, Br. Gerard Brady CFC.

"We echo the call of Pope Leo XIV for a radical transformation of culture to confront our environmental crisis, *"It is now more important than ever to return to the heart... It is only by returning to the heart that a true ecological conversion can take place,"*" Br. Brady added.

National Environmental Standards were envisaged in the review of the EPBC Act as being "the centrepiece" of reforms, containing clear requirements for protecting endangered species and other nationally significant matters for all actions made under the Act. CRA is troubled that the Bills do not contain the clear requirement that Standards be established, nor do they outline the matters that Standards must address.

"In our submission, we have called for the Bills to ensure that the creation of new Standards is mandatory, and that they address the areas proposed in the 2020 review of the Act, to truly improve environmental protection. It is also important that the Standards are legally enforceable, not subject to the Environment Minister's discretion as the Bills currently allow," said Anne Walker, CRA National Executive Director.

"Our submission particularly highlighted the concerns of the Northern Territory's Land Councils, who have expressed disappointment that they are not being consulted as the government develops a Standard on First Nations engagement and participation in decision-making," Anne added.

CRA also outlined as problematic the Bills' allowance for developers to compensate for any long-lasting significant environmental impact through offsets or paying a restoration contribution, deforestation loopholes that allow land clearing to continue under Regional Forest Agreements and the 'continuous use exemption,' and the absence of an enforceable climate trigger.

"It is clear that the Bills need further strengthening to stop and reverse our destructive environmental trajectory," Anne concluded.

Read CRA's [submission](#).

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