

Joint statement: Australia's national environment laws

We are Australians that dearly love the land, water, wildlife, and culture of our great country. We are committed to communities having a fair go, to openness in decision-making and to having our voices heard on decisions that affect us. We are committed to the wellbeing of this generation and future generations - and to protecting our people and our landscapes from the devastating impacts and costs of climate disasters.

We are dismayed that the Albanese Government has put forward national environment law reform that experts tell us will take us backwards - backwards on protecting environments, backwards on integrity, and backwards on community rights and interests.

Our national environment laws were first drafted 25 years ago, under John Howard, and they have never been fit for purpose. We are dismayed that the Albanese Government is proposing new laws that go backwards from that, despite the many new crises and pressures that we face.

We call on the Australian Parliament to reject the Albanese government's new laws and all the many components of them which will take us backwards, including:

- The "streamlined" process that will cut out local communities, Traditional Owners and the public from having a say in decisions on coal and gas, renewables and minerals projects;
- Handing decisions of national significance, including impacts on our water, to state and territory governments, who have shown they can't be trusted;
- Creating sweeping new corruption risks by giving the Minister unprecedented power to decide how and when the law is actually applied (known as "rulings");
- Entrenching a broad "national interest" loophole which can be used to approve almost any development regardless of environmental impacts;
- Creating a new 'pay to destroy' offset scheme that would allow developers to pay money into a fund in return for obtaining approval;
- Allowing the Minister to decide to switch off important safeguards for offshore gas projects, impacting First Nations consultation and environmental assessment.

Only when these backward steps have been fixed, will there be an opening to then take the reforms forward for the benefit of all Australians, such as by:

- Ensuring that Aboriginal cultural values are a key part of all assessments and requiring Free, Prior and Informed Consent from Traditional Owners on project decisions;
- Better protecting water catchments, groundwater, forests and wildlife habitat;
- Ensuring all polluting activities are subject to stringent assessments of full climate impacts;
- Giving all communities the right to challenge decisions on their merits.

Australia has committed to halt extinction by 2030 and restore the integrity, connectivity and resilience of ecosystems by mid-century. The Albanese Government and the Australian parliament must act on this commitment with laws that safeguard Australia's natural heritage and the wellbeing of future generations.

Lock the Gate Alliance	350.org Australia	Resource Justice Network
Australian Youth Climate Coalition	Move Beyond Coal	Australian Forests and Climate Alliance
Friends of the Earth Australia	Beyond Gas Network	Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action
Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC)	The Australia Institute	The Sunrise Project Australia
Mineral Policy Institute	Climate Justice Coalition	ActionAid Australia
Parents for Climate	Doctors for the Environment Australia	Transparency International
Environment Centre Northern Territory	Conservation Council of South Australia	Environment Tasmania
Conservation Council ACT Region	Conservation Council WA	Victorian National Parks Association
Environment Victoria	Nature Conservation Council NSW	NSW Wildlife Council
Arid Lands Environment Centre	North Queensland Conservation Council	South East Regional Conservation Alliance
Mudgee District Environment Group	Madden Sainsbury Foundation	Running Stream Water Users Association
Environs Kimberley	Nambucca Valley Conservation Association	The Bimblebox Alliance
Cairns and Far North Environment Centre	Clarence Valley Conservation Coalition	Boroondara Reconciliation Network
Mackay Conservation Group	Healthy Rivers Dubbo	Mudgee Region Health Alliance
Capricorn Conservation Council	Protect the Bush Alliance Inc	Clarence Catchment Alliance
Environmental Advocacy in Central Queensland	BirdLife Sth Queensland	Gloucester Environment Group
The Environment Council of Central Queensland	Kyogle Environment Group	Kinglake Friends of the Forest
North Coast Environment Council	BirdLife Top End	Rylstone District Environment Society
Darling Downs Environment Council	Clean Water For Rivers	Northern Rivers Guardians
Central West Environment Council	Hunter Environment Lobby	Blicks River Guardians
	Mulgoa Valley Landcare Group.	Lithgow Environment Group
	NT Field Naturalists Club	

Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange	South East Forest Rescue	Dubbo Field Naturalist & Conservation Society
Planning Action Network (NT)	North East Forest Alliance	Mudgee Region Action Group
Friends of Lee Point	WA Forest Alliance	Save Our Darling Downs
ACF Community Canberra	Clarence Environment Centre	Nimbin Environment Centre
ACF Adelaide Community	Lawsons Creek Water Users Association	Elands Community Centre
ACF Mornington Group	Save Deongwar State Forest	Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN)
ACF Northern Beaches	SA MP Engagement Group (SAMPEG)	Climate Justice Alliance Northern Rivers
ACF Community Boroondara	Peoples Climate Assembly	Nillumbik Climate Action Team
ACF Community Melbourne NxNW	Tasmanian Climate Collective	Lighter Footprints
ACF Community Eastern Sydney	Bathurst Community Climate Action Network	Resilient 4017
ACF Community Eastern Rosellas	Darebin Climate Action Now	Electrify 5049+
Central Victoria ACF Community Group	NUCA (Neighbours United for Climate Action)	Tomorrow Movement Wollongong
ACF Brisbane South & Logan Community Group	XR South-East Melbourne	XR Bramble Bay (Northside Brisbane)
ACF Community Greater Western Sydney	Climate Action Newcastle	Australian Religious Response to Climate Change SA (ARRCC SA)
Earth Care Mt Barker	Canterbury Bankstown Climate Action Network	Yarra Climate Action Now
Letters for the Environment Central Australia	Climate Action Merri-bek	Chisholm Climate Action Network
Caldera Environment Centre	Fossil Free SA	Extinction Rebellion South Australia
Friends of the Koala	Shire Climate Action Network	Green Shareholders
Friends of Cudgen Nature Reserve	Midwest Carbon Zero	Climate Change Balmain- Rozelle
Maules Creek Community Council	Vote Earth Now	Grafton Knitting Nannas
Terania Native Forest Action Group	Darwin and NT Parents for Climate	Sydney Knitting Nannas & Friends
Illawarra Knitting Nannas Against Greed (IKNAG)	Parents for Climate Adelaide	
	Coonabarabran Knitting Nannas	