



HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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The Rt. Hon. Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

20/11/12

Strong national environmental protection laws

Dear Prime Minister

The undersigned **United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Global 500 Laureates¹** are writing to you today to offer our support and encouragement for your Government's sustained endeavours to protect Australia's biological diversity, and the social and economic benefits that will consequently arise. This is especially so with respect to maintaining your Government's leadership role through implementation of strong national environmental protection laws and Australia's obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We have been made aware of the numerous positive impacts that the current Commonwealth environmental legislative framework has had on the maintenance of terrestrial and marine biological diversity across the country, acknowledged for example when the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999* (EPBC Act) was bestowed the *World Future Council's – Future Policy Award in 2010*.

We have been concerned to hear however that there are proposals in train to weaken the EPBC Act and to allow the states and territories to approve developments affecting *Matters of National Environment Significance* without any Commonwealth oversight. We believe this would be a retrograde step in relation to the development of environmental law in Australia, with significant and negative implications for the conservation of biological diversity and achieving ecologically sustainable development.

We are also well aware of course that your country is one of a very few biologically mega-diverse developed countries on the face of this Earth. The array of natural ecosystems and their component species is simply breathtaking, making Australia one of the most important and exciting places in the world for the long-term conservation of biological diversity.

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¹ Laureates are elected to the Global 500 Roll of Honour of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in recognition of outstanding practical achievement in the protection and improvement of the environment.

A number of your Government's recent initiatives, including *Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010 – 2030*, the billion dollar *Biodiversity Fund*, other 'Green Carbon' provisions contained within the *Clean Energy Future* policy package, the *National Wildlife Corridor Plan*, the protection of 19 million hectares of the *West Kimberley* under *National Heritage* laws and the announced dedication of marine reserves over one third of Australia's EEZ, have succinctly highlighted the pressures facing your nation's natural resources, and laid out solutions and goals for going much of the way towards attaining true ecologically sustainable development.

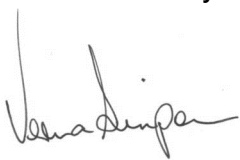
One of the key tools for maintaining biological diversity integrity and ecosystem health throughout Australia is your Government's critical role in assuming an oversight for protecting *Matters of National Environmental Significance* recognised under the EPBC Act.

The individual and organisational UNEP *Global 500 Laureates* below would like to offer our support for a continuation of your Government's efforts to develop best possible policies and practices for the conservation of biological diversity through the maintenance of the current powers contained within the EPBC Act, and to avoid, at all costs, the devolution of such powers.

The experience globally in federated states shows that when national governments retain key powers to protect the environment, far better ecological and economic sustainability outcomes can be expected. Similarly, we have been made aware that the implementation of the EPBC Act over the last 12 years has resulted in a large number of first class environmental decisions that have ultimately benefited Australian society.

We commend your Government for the range of far-sighted environmental initiatives that have been implemented in the last five years but urge your continuing and strong adherence to effective and national environmental law.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Verna Simpson', written in a cursive style.

Verna Simpson
Global 500 Laureate
Director
Humane Society International (Australia)

On behalf of the following Global 500 Laureates:

Prince Agyirey-Kwakye

Specialist Biomedical Scientist
Medical Microbiology & Infection Control
England

Sir David Attenborough

Natural History Broadcaster and Conservationist
England

Vilmar S. D. Berna

Green Award of the Americas
Editor, Journal of Environment and Environmental Portal
Brazil

Idelisa Bonnelly

Foundation Dominicana de Estudios Marinos
Dominican Republic

Professor Melhi Boydak

Faculty of Forests
Istanbul University
Turkey

Dr Bob Brown

Tasmanian

Dr Anne H. Ehrlich

Senior Research Scientist
Biology Department
Stanford University
USA

Professor Paul Ehrlich

Director
Centre for Conservation Biology
Stanford University
USA

John Elkington

Executive Chairman
Volans & Co-founder SustainAbilityz
England

Anwar Fazal

Director
Right Livelihood College
Malaysia

Molly Gaskin

President
The Pointe-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust
Trinidad & Tobago

Jeff Gibbs

Founder
Global Activators
Canada

Marilyn Mosley Gordanier

President
Global 500 Forum
Founder
Laurel Springs School
USA

Veit Koester

Past Head
Ecology Division of the National Forest and Nature Agency
Chair
International negotiations for the Convention on Biological Diversity
Denmark

Dr Thomas E. Lovejoy

Professor, Environmental Science and Policy, George Mason University
Blue Planet Prize winner, The Asahi Glass Foundation
USA

Dr Shirley McGreal OBE

Founder
International Primate Protection League
USA

Dr Donald McMichael CBE

Consultant
Office of the Commissioner for the Environment
Chair, inaugural Commonwealth Biological Diversity Advisory Committee
Australia

Professor Bruno Messerli

Former Rector of the University of Bern
Switzerland

Professor Brian Morton OBE

Emeritus Professor of Marine Science
University of Hong Kong
Duke of Edinburgh Conservation Gold Medal 2004
England

Professor Norman Myers

Honorary Visiting Fellow
Green College, Oxford University
Blue Planet Prize winner, The Asahi Glass Foundation
England

Nancy Lee Nash

Conservationist, Journalist, Educationalist
China

Dr Zygfryd Nowak

University Professor
Poland

Michael A. N. Odula

Founder & Director
Rusinga Island Centre for Ecological Living & Learning
Kenya

Perez M. Olindo

African Wildlife Foundation
Kenya

Jeunesse Park

Climate Reality Leader
Founder of Food and Tress for Africa
South Africa

Dr Peter H. Raven

President Emeritus
Missouri Botanical Garden
Corresponding Member
Australian Academy of Science
USA

Dr Oscar Ravera

Professor,
CNR-ISE Institute of Ecosystem Study
Italy

John Sinclair

Honorary Secretary
Fraser Island Defence Organisation
Australia

Dr Dame Daphne M. Sheldrick MBE, MBS

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust
Kenya

Robert Swan OBE

Explorer and Environmentalist
England

Lily Venizelos

President & Founder
Mediterranean Association to Save Sea the Turtles
IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group
Greece

Paul Winter

Musician
USA