

Media release

Fixing the EPBC Act for better business and environmental outcomes

Statement from Tania Constable, Chief Executive Officer

The independent review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) gives government an important reform opportunity for a better environment, more jobs and faster economic recovery.

Reforms to the operation of the EPBC Act are needed to address unnecessary duplication and complexity, providing greater certainty for businesses and the community while achieving sound environmental outcomes.

Australia's world-leading minerals sector is committed to the protection of our unique environment, including upholding leading practice environmental protection based on sound science and robust risk-based approaches.

Significant growth in regulation across all levels of government including the EPBC Act has not led to better environmental outcomes.

The 2016 State of the Environment report found that under the EPBC Act 'the status of biodiversity in Australia is generally considered poor and deteriorating'.

For business, regulatory inefficiency and uncertainty deters investment and increased costs while greatly limiting job opportunities and economic benefits for regional communities from mining.

A one-year delay to a project can reduce its Net Present Value by between 10 and 13 per cent per year, and for large mining projects (with a value from \$3 billion to \$4 billion), delay costs can be up to \$1 million per day.

Since the review process began, Australia has faced an unprecedented economic and social threat from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pragmatic reforms to the EPBC Act will help reduce delays in project approvals, stimulate investment and fast-track the major projects needed for Australia's speedy post-COVID recovery.

The [submission](#) to the review by the MCA, NSW Minerals Council, Queensland Resources Council, CMEWA, SACOME and Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council highlights reforms which would improve the Act including:

- Eliminating or reduce duplication and ensuring consistency between Commonwealth and state/territory processes
- Reducing delays in assessment and approval processes
- Improving certainty for proponents, government and the community
- Ensuring better, fit-for-purpose regulation – not lower environmental standards.

Reforms to the Act are long overdue, and numerous reviews over the past decade have repeatedly highlighted opportunities to improve regulatory efficiency by addressing unnecessary duplication and complexity while maintaining strong environmental protections.

An improved EPBC Act would build on positive recent government initiatives to reduce delays by integrating environmental data and establishing a digital platform for environmental assessment with Western Australia and additional resourcing to address the backlog of projects under assessment.

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