



30 October, 2025

## ACF Board statement on EPBC Reform

The ACF has worked constructively and in good faith with Minister Watt, to provide into the government's EPBC reform considerations, to be tabled today (30 October, 2025).

Unfortunately, in their current form, despite many positive elements, the bills do not protect nature.

This is the biggest reform for nature laws in years. Parliament has to get it right.

Good EPBC reform that actually works to protect nature and the jobs that rely on it must:

- Close the deforestation loopholes: the same rules must apply to all industries, Establish an independent environmental regulator: a referee who blows the whistle when the rules are broken, making decisions based on evidence, not politics. no special carve-outs.
- Set firm, clear rules for nature protection and restoration, so everyone knows what is in and what is protected.
- Require decision-makers to consider climate harm in all decisions, because the fossil fuel-driven climate impacts on nature cannot be delegated elsewhere.

We welcome the inclusion in the draft bills an EPA, increased penalties for violations and giving the environmental regulator effective powers to stop work. However, an EPA in isolation these will not deliver the nature reforms required, as we have seen in some states already.

The package has to be considered as a whole. Speeding up approvals and an EPA will be meaningless unless underpinned by strong legislated National Environmental Standards.

The EPBC reform bills must have clear language and be based on strong National Environment Standards that are consistently applied across the nation. The proposed bill is riddled with vagaries and leaves far too much up to the discretion of the Minister. When this happens, business and vested interests win and the environment loses.

Legislation must also be considered with future Ministers in mind. The draft bill does not ensure nature protections in law, leaving it to the Minister of the day to issue regulations and with a framework of extremely wide discretionary powers which could further undermine nature protections in future. This could leave nature protections in an even weaker state than they are now.

Good governance requires that there be sufficient time for proper consultation and consideration of the impact, including any unintended consequences.

We call for the standard Senate inquiry process to ensure the legislation delivers for nature. And we call on the Government to negotiate with Parliamentarians who love nature and want a better future for our children, to reform our failed nature protection laws.