

What is the Urban Taskforce?

- The Urban Taskforce is a non-profit organisation representing prominent property developers and equity financiers.
- Engages in constructive dialogue with both government and the community.

Our Mission

- ✓ Efficient planning and environment laws
- ✓ Quality urban design
- ✓ Increased economic activity
- ✓ Improved quality of life in urban communities.

Current situation: EPBC Act

- ✓ 25 per cent of referrals made under the EPBC Act - all are subject to both state and federal approval requirements.
- ✓ Style of natural resource management law but increasingly is assuming the role of federal town planning legislation.
- ✓ Regulation for protected areas should not be the same as regulation for private land.
- ✓ Bilateral agreements are good, but no “approvals bilateral”.

Current situation: EPBC Act 2

- ✓ Wide, unreviewable, discretion exercised by the Federal Environment Minister when the EPBC Act applies
 - reducing investment certainty for proponents.
- ✓ There is an increasing overlap between the state heritage sites/protected areas listed under the state legislation and federally listed national and world heritage sites.
- ✓ No automatic recognition of state offset, biobanking and biodiversity certification schemes either at a “controlled action” or approval stage.

Our view

- Simplify the objects of the EPBC Act: primacy of ecologically sustainable development should be the rationale.
- The Act's text should give more explicit recognition to economic and social considerations as well as environmental considerations.
- Ideally, the legislation should be split to distinguish between the management of protected areas and the regulation of private land.
- Merit appeals for applicant for urban development approvals are a standard part of state planning systems.

Our view 2

- Duplicated listing regimes should be abolished.
 - All lower order heritage, state reservation or threatened species listings should lapse on a national listing.
- Commonwealth should also delegate full approval authority for urban development to state officials so that land use decisions can be made on an integrated basis
 - that is, all biodiversity issues, community amenity issues, social and economic issues should truly be considered together.
- Automatic recognition for state offset, biobanking and biodiversity schemes: for “controlled actions” and for approval stage.

The independent review

- The federal environment law is “repetitive, lengthy, unnecessarily complex, and overly prescriptive”.
 - But few solid reform proposals to reduce the red tape burden.
- The Commonwealth to abandon the approach to ecologically sustainable development that has been in use since 1992.
 - “environmental considerations are to be considered first when making decisions under the Act”.

The independent review

- Strategic assessments to be used to impose “cost-effective” climate change mitigation opportunities.
 - Impacting on urban land release.
- The Commonwealth to abandon the approach to ecologically sustainable development that has been in use since 1992.
 - “Environmental considerations are to be considered first when making decisions under the Act”.
- More third party litigation, including merits appeals for objectors.

Nationally significant ecosystems

- High comparative biological diversity, within ecosystem type;
- may help build resilient sustainable landscapes;
- contains high value remnants of a particular type of habitat;
- contains high value areas that create connectivity between other ecosystems;
- significant for a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of habitat types in Australia;
- it is under severe and imminent threat;
- it provides habitat critical for listed EPBC Act threatened species listed; or
- provides critical nationally important ecosystem functions.

Independent Review - positives

- Merits review for applicants.
- Some limited consideration of ESD in listings but not enough.
- Single national threatened species lists.
- Greater use of strategic assessments to reduce red tape and plan on a landscape scale.