

15.11.25

**The Hon Murray Watt**

Minister for the Environment and Water  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Angie Bell MP**

Shadow Minister for the Environment  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Subject: Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025**

Dear Minister Watt and Shadow Minister Bell,

The Alliance of 26 industry groups representing every part of the economy, including Australia's small, medium and large businesses, miners, farmers, and the investment community writes to express our strong support for the passage of the *Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025*, provided that relevant amendments are made.

Without making the necessary amendments, there is a risk of establishing a system that's even slower and more complex than the present system without the clarity and certainty needed for investment.

With the amendments outlined below, these environment protection reforms represent a powerful opportunity to ensure Australia has a modern, effective, and efficient environmental approvals system that supports both strong environmental outcomes and continued economic growth.

**Need for Reform and Timely Passage**

Australia needs a reformed environmental approvals framework that delivers clarity, confidence, and faster decision-making.

Under the current regime, lengthy and uncertain environmental approval processes are holding back investment, job creation, and the delivery of essential projects in energy, infrastructure, and resources.

The Alliance urges the Government and Opposition to work constructively on this legislation to unlock opportunities, and support national prosperity and streamline our approvals system.

The reformed Act must deliver a net benefit to business and the economy and a net benefit for the environment, not simply a new layer of complexity.

To get this reform right, the following key changes are essential:

1. **Address unacceptable impacts** – the proposed provisions are imprecise and open to wide interpretation, particularly the definitions of 'irreplaceable' and 'seriously impair'. This potentially sets a low bar for knocking out projects as 'unacceptable'. Review and revision must occur to reduce the risk of unintended impacts.
2. **Clarify the powers of the EPA** – the "stop work" powers proposed for the new EPA must be open to review and appeal and include appropriate safeguards and procedural fairness.

3. **Ensure social and economic factors are appropriately considered by retaining accountability and transparency**– the EPA’s role should focus on compliance and enforcement, not primary decision-making on project approvals. Retaining ministerial accountability, with the Department undertaking assessment for approvals, is vital to ensure decisions balance environmental and economic considerations, and to allow the EPA to provide assurance on decision-making at all levels. The EPA should also be able to be held accountable for delivering on the Minister’s Statement of Expectations.
4. **Guarantee faster approvals and one state accreditation at minimum** – the system must deliver faster, more certain approvals. At least one state or territory should be accredited for approvals under the national framework when reforms commence to demonstrate that streamlined environmental regulation is possible.
5. **Maintain existing assessment approaches** – while the new streamlined assessment approach is supported, the removal of other approaches that provide a mid-way assessment process risks unintentionally increasing timeframes for some projects.
6. **Provide flexibility around the new sunset period for non-controlled actions** – recognising that large investments can take more time than the proposed five years, the Minister should have flexibility to extend the sunset period without requiring a new referral. The legislation should also allow for the variation of non-controlled action decisions to accommodate changes in project design, timing, or implementation.
7. **Noting the importance of supporting emissions reduction, ensure emissions disclosures are not considered as part of the project assessment process** – and rely on existing reporting requirements, rather than create new ones.

### A Balanced Path Forward

Australia’s prosperity depends on an environmental approvals system that is efficient, trusted and enables investment. With these amendments, this legislation will achieve strong environmental protection while still supporting sustained economic growth.

We need to see key changes to the current draft of the Environment Protection Reform Bill to ensure rapid delivery of the housing, energy and critical minerals projects our country needs.

The Alliance stands ready to continue constructive engagement with the Parliament to support this vital reform.

