



Terri Butler MP

Member for Griffith. Shadow Minister for Environment and Water.

Failed Abbott environment bill rehash puts environment, jobs and investment at risk

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The Morrison Government has introduced an environment bill which is a rehash of Tony Abbott's failed 2014 approach putting the environment, jobs and investment at risk.

The Samuel Review is the most significant opportunity for reform in the last 20 years – the Government must get it right.

Scott Morrison has very favourable conditions for reform: an Opposition that has said we will engage constructively, a well-respected Review chair who is working with leaders from agriculture, resources and business, as well as traditional owners, conservationists and academics.

But Scott Morrison is squandering this opportunity by putting up Abbott 2.0. This is an absolute mess.

Our environment needs protection, business needs certainty and Australians need jobs. These changes fail on each count.

Labor has taken a considered approach to reform and constructively engaged with the Samuel Review from the very start.

But the Morrison Government is choosing conflict over considered outcomes. They are putting jobs and investment at risk. Australia can't afford to allow the alarming environmental decline that we have seen under the Liberals and Nationals.

This backwards-looking failed Abbott law rehash – being pursued under the guise of

the pandemic - is yet another broken promise from the Morrison Government.

The model that Professor Samuel proposed in his Interim Report is contingent on the creation of strong Interim National Environmental Standards. And when the government publicly released his interim report in July they said that proposed legislative changes would be accompanied by the standards.

Environment Minister Sussan Ley said the Government would introduce “*strong rigorous environmental standards*” that had “*buy-in across the board*” at the same time as introducing legislative change.

The Morrison Government should not pursue amendments until the interim standards are finalised and made available to the people of Australia.

Without national environment standards recognised in law, each state jurisdiction could negotiate different standards into each agreement, which would increase job and investment delays and become a regulatory nightmare.

The Morrison Government should:

1. Introduce **strong national environmental standards**; and
1. Establish a **genuinely independent ‘cop on the beat’** for Australia’s environment;
1. Fix the explosion in **unnecessary 510 per cent** job and investment delays caused by their massive funding cuts.

Labor’s record

Every major achievement in environmental protection in this nation’s history has been delivered by a Labor government.

Labor’s legacy is that we protected Antarctica, the Daintree, Kakadu, the Great Barrier Reef, the Franklin. We created Landcare, and we created what was at the time the largest network of marine parks in the world. Only Labor has the will and the capacity to protect Australia’s environment.

Liberal and Nationals record of environmental mismanagement

Australia has a jobs crisis and environmental crisis and the Morrison Government is failing on both counts. They have:

- Cut **40%** of the funding to the environment department, which predictably led to job and investment delays, mismanagement, and environmental decline;
- Overseen massive delays to jobs and investment, which **exploded to 510%** under their watch;
- Overseen 79% of decisions being affected by error or being non-compliant. During that time, they have assessed tens of billions of dollars’ worth of projects;

- Overseen unprecedented decline in Australia's beautiful and precious natural environment.

If Scott Morrison was serious about securing broad support and durable reform, he would not be rehashing Tony Abbott's failed 2014 bill, breaking his promise on national standards or cherry-picked the interim report of one of Australia's most experienced business regulators.