**Wild about federal politics – what hope for systemic change?**

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Abstract

Our environmental laws are failing us.  The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act was meant to protect the places and wildlife which were so important, and so fragile, they mattered to all Australians.

Since then, thousands of damaging developments have gone ahead. Those laws have failed to protect our precious places and to stop our wildlife from heading towards extinction.

Our environment is under attack like never before. Tasmania's incredible Tarkine rainforest is under threat from mining. Our national parks are at risk from logging, shooting and grazing. Our iconic Great Barrier Reef is becoming a highway for coal and gas shipping. Even our beloved koala and Tasmanian devil are facing extinction, and logging has reduced Victoria's state emblem, the Leadbeater's possum, to less than a thousand in the wild.

But rather than strengthening our environmental laws to meet these challenges, both the major parties have proposed further weakening the federal government’s role by handing off federal approval powers to state governments. Labor has since backed away from this proposal, but not so far as to support a Greens amendment to take approvals bilateral agreements off the law books. Tony Abbott even wants to roll in local approvals to his one-stop-shop of environmental destruction.

If state governments had sole control of national environment law in the past, the Franklin River would be dammed, there would be oil rigs in the Great Barrier Reef, cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park and Traveston Dam would have gone ahead.

In this presentation Australian Greens Senator for Queensland and environmental lawyerLarissa Waters will canvass the environmental legal and political debate of the last 2 years, and outline the Greens reform proposals for our environmental laws that actually work, whilst bemoaning the systemic constraints of our current political environment.