

Striving for more effective national environment laws



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The Australian Panel of Experts on Environment Law (**Expert Panel**) was convened by the Places You Love alliance during the World Parks Congress in November 2014. The Expert Panel brings together more than 15 national and international academics and practitioners with a broad range of experience.²

The Expert Panel will formulate new legislative and regulatory options that ensure fair, effective and efficient protection and management of Australia's environment as the foundation for sustainable jobs and a prosperous society. At this stage the goal is for the Expert Panel to deliver a series of recommendations in the first half of 2016.

The motivation for establishing the Expert Panel was a realisation that the major indicators of environmental health continue to decline despite decades of effort and reform. Late last year Places You Love published a report on the state of the Australian environment, the *Australia We Love* report, which can be accessed from our website.³

Clearly our collective efforts at this point are inadequate and we need to look to improve. Alongside the work of the Expert Panel, the Places You Love alliance are looking at corporate and individual behaviours.

Under its terms of reference, the Expert Panel will address current federal environmental law, the role of the federal government and collaborative approaches across jurisdictions, administrative architecture, new legislative frameworks and best practice approaches.

Adjunct Professor Rob Fowler, convenor of the Expert Panel, recognises both the significant challenge the group has taken on, and the importance of the task. Professor Fowler has said:

The Panel will examine and combine the good parts of the existing system with recommendations for a new generation of laws that adequately address the environmental challenges we face in coming decades. This is an opportunity to embrace emerging trends in environmental management, and make recommendations for 'next generation' laws that reflect international best practice and provide for a coordinated and effective approach to preserving our natural assets.

Given the vast scope of "environmental law", the Expert Panel does not intend to draft a comprehensive package of laws at all levels of government and across all environmental issues. The Expert Panel will use the federal level as the basis for detailed analysis and from there provide recommendations for improvements across all jurisdictions for effective environmental protection.

The work will be underpinned by a high level set of principles and clear set of responsibilities and accountabilities across the breadth of environmental issues.

The Expert Panel is recruiting specialist advisers to help with the work. There are many skilled and experienced legal minds we need to help support the work and test the thinking.

A fundamental element of this work is the commitment to broad consultation and input. This extends well beyond the legal sphere. The goal is to engage with thousands of Australians who care

¹ The Places You Love alliance is the largest collaboration of environmental organisations in Australian history and represents 1.5 million Australian members and supporters.

² A full list of Expert Panel members and our terms of reference can be found at www.placesyoulove.org/expertpanel/

³ <http://www.placesyoulove.org/australiawelove/>



about the environment and have personal experiences and views about the laws that are designed to protect the environment and the community. One audience that will be invited is the members and supporters of the Places You Love member organisations, numbering approximately 1.5 million Australians.

The Places You Love alliance is committed to the concept of co-design, where experts, stakeholders and the broader community work together to deliver an output forged collaboratively. The Expert Panel is central to this and has a pivotal role in providing technical expertise and in analysing community input.

There will be at least two opportunities over the next year where people will be presented with discussion papers and invited to have input. This will include a substantial effort by the Places You Love alliance and the panel to meet with key stakeholders face to face.

We invite all comment and expressions of interest from the legal community as we attempt to roll out this ambitious project.