

THIS SUBMISSION IS MADE ON BEHALF OF THE SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION GROUP INC

COMMENTS ON BIODIVERSITY BILL 2025

I make comments in particular on the Biodiversity Council and its composition.

Section 15 sets out the composition of the Biodiversity Council as follows:

15 – Composition of Council

- (1) The Council will consist of at least 7 members and not more than 12 members appointed by the Minister of whom –
 - (a) 1 must be a member of the NPCAC; and
 - (b) 2 must be members of the FNEBC (being persons of different genders); and
 - (c) 1 must be a member of the Scientific Committee.
- (2) The Minister will appoint persons to the Council with a view to –
 - (a) achieving a balance of expertise that is relevant to addressing the conservation, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity; and
 - (b) selecting a reasonable range of persons who collectively have skills, knowledge and experience in the following areas:
 - (i) terrestrial biodiversity conservation and restoration;
 - (ii) aquatic biodiversity conservation and restoration;
 - (iii) local government;
 - (iv) energy and resources;
 - (v) scientific research;
 - (vi) primary production or pastoralism;
 - (vii) land use, urban or regional planning;
 - (viii) climate change adaptation.

The NPCAC refers to Sections 17 to 19 – Establishment of Native Plants Clearance Assessment Committee.

The FNEBC refers to Sections 20 to 22, The Establishment of First Nations Expert Biodiversity Committee.

The Scientific Committee refers Sections 23 to 25.

In accordance with the current wording, a minister or government of the day has the potential opportunity to 'stack' 8 of the 12 positions on the Biodiversity Committee. It only has to have one scientist, one plant expert and two first nations people. The rest can be all selected from any one or more of Sub-section 15 (2) (b) (i) to (viii). In our view, the wording of Sub-section 15 (2) (a) is too weak to ensure that people who hold central concern for the environment are on the committee.

The current wording could result in a majority of pastoralists or miners as members, for instance, with only their vested interests.

The reason for the failure of the previous biodiversity legislation is that not enough real protection of the environment was specifically mandated.

In our opinion Sub-Section 15 (1) should be re-written with the following inclusions:

15 – Composition of Council

- (1) The Council will consist of at least 7 members and not more than 12 members appointed by the Minister of whom –
 - (a) 2 must be members of the NPCAC; and

- (b) 2 must be members of the FNEBC (being persons of different genders); and
- (c) 3 must be members of the Scientific Committee.

Consideration should also be given to ensuring that no more than 2 persons can be selected from any one of the options of Sub-sections (2) (b) (i) to (viii).

[REDACTED]

President

Scientific Expedition Group Inc