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#### Submission

As a donor to several environmental charities I am most concerned at the suggestion currently being mooted that the government restrict the ways in which my donations can be used.

The proposal that half of my donations be required to be spent on 'remediation' works is not acceptable to me. It is a matter for me to decide how my donations should be spent and to select organisations whose aims I support.

Some charities such as Trust for Nature, the National Trust and the Australian Garden History Society use some of the funds raised by donations on works to restore natural or cultural sites. They also engage in advocacy on behalf of the environment and culturally significant sites and landscapes. But it is for the charities, their members and their supporters, not the government, to decide what they will do. Restrictions on their advocacy must be opposed. The donors and the wider community expect environmental charities to be strong advocates for environmental outcomes, and heritage charities to be strong advocates for heritage places.

Advocacy to improve environmental policy is about preventing damage from happening in the first place, not only cleaning up the mess or fixing the damage after the fact. Advocacy for better policy can be the most efficient expenditure compared to the cost of repairing future environmental damage. Limiting the ability of environment groups to advocate for our environment would result in poorer environmental outcomes.

Some major environmental problems, like climate change, can't be stopped through on-ground environmental remediation. Environmental charities must be free to advocate for the actions urgently required to deal with climate changes caused by human activities such as burning fossil fuels.

Each organisation must be free to set its own priorities and to make an informed assessment of the best way to achieve those environmental outcomes, whether this is through advocacy or on-ground remediation.

Remediation works can have their own problems. Some, such as weeding, are often temporary in their effects. If herbicides are used the result is environmental pollution.

The Inquiry and discussion paper create a false dichotomy between remediation and advocacy. On-ground work should always be based on carefully thought out policies to which environmental charities can contribute. Support for sound policies or funding from government, may only eventuate as a result of advocacy.

The proposed attempt to silence charities that are seeking to protect our environments and our heritage from harmful actions by governments and corporations is a serious infringement on freedom in our society.

Dr John Dwyer QC



