

Senior Advisor
Individuals and Indirect Tax Division
The Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600
DGR@treasury.gov.au

Miss C. Price


August 3, 2017

**SUBMISSION TO THE TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIFT RECIPIENT REFORM OPPORTUNITIES
DISCUSSION PAPER**

I am writing to express, in the strongest terms possible, my opposition to potential reforms regarding Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) listed organisations, and in particular, those reforms which focus on environmental organisations (ENGOS).

Not surprisingly, these reforms parallel those proposed in the final report of The House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment's inquiry on the Register of Environmental Organisations (REO inquiry), 2016. However, when a committee includes a majority of members from the Liberal National Party (LNP) which has consistently denied the existential threat of Climate Change, blatantly promotes coal as a viable energy source even after becoming a signatory to the Paris Climate Agreement, and publically denigrates the advocacy of ENGOS, and when that committee includes members such as Mr George Christensen MP, who unashamedly and pejoratively labels environmentalists as 'gutless green grubs' and 'eco-terrorists', and when the Chair of the committee, The Honourable John Cobb, berates farmers for siding with 'rabid left wing protesters' is it any wonder that the final report would seek to hobble the work of Australian ENGOS. I would bring to the attention of the Treasury - because clearly you have missed it- the fact that there was a dissenting report from the Labor members of the committee but I do not see any of their recommendations being put forward by the Treasury, namely, that the 'overwhelming weight of evidence...points to the vital importance of maintaining the tax deductibility of donations to environmental organisations, **WITHOUT** (my emphasis) imposing further conditions or constraints on the operation of these organisations'. You obviously also missed Mr Jason Wood's additional comments -a Liberal member no less- in which he highlights the beneficial work that ENGOS have participated in over the decades and his comments that 'it was due to environmental activists, through their efforts and through the use of a blockade that major environmental disasters have been prevented.' In view of all the above, I can reach no other conclusion than this, that the Treasury's discussion paper to impose extra conditions on ENGOS is nothing more than a political ploy to restrain the vital work that these organisations carry out, day in and day out; in short Treasury is acting as the lackey for a blatantly corrupt government that has shown absolutely no regard for the Australian environment and deliberately seeks to promote the interests of fossil fuel and mining companies over the future of the Australian people.

In reality there is no need for any discussion regarding advocacy activities or the introduction of sunset clauses. It was amply demonstrated at the REO inquiry that the Australian Tax Office and the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (ACNC) already have the powers to register, regulate and hold charities accountable and hence, there is absolutely no need to impose yet another layer of red tape on these organisations, when it would simply be duplicating information that is already available. As for the necessity for environmental remediation this is a deliberate ploy by malignant interest groups who wish to reduce the amount of time ENGOs can spend on advocacy. As it is, the vast majority of individuals who work or volunteer for ENGOs are already participating in remediation work both on a personal and community level and it is a specious argument to hold these groups responsible for cleaning up the mess made by others. I would bring to the Treasury's attention the fact that under the LNP millions of dollars have been ripped away from organisations such as Landcare, CSIRO, The Biodiversity Fund, Australian Marine Parks, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority etc, etc. I find it the height of hypocrisy for the government to require ENGO's to be undertaking extra remediation work when they themselves are deliberately undermining any attempt to affect remediation, and in fact, are doing their level best to see that the whole of Australia is mined and shipped out as fast as possible, leaving a denuded and desolate landscape as evidence of their malfeasance.

As for the imposition of sanctions for illegal activity I would strongly suggest the Treasury forget about ENGOs and look to members of the current LNP government for illegal activity. Even for an organisation as obtuse as you would appear to be, I am certain you cannot have missed comments by Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Barnaby Joyce on July 27, 2017, that 'We have taken water (**ILLEGALLY**, I would emphasise), put it back into agriculture, so we could look after you and make sure we don't have the greenies running the show...' There are no words to describe how despicable these comments and actions are, when the Murray Darling Basin Plan is meant to ensure the life and well-being of the whole basin which encompasses 4 states, and to admit to the deliberate pumping out of water for a few select irrigators is, I would suggest, criminal negligence in the highest degree and a total abrogation of duty from the Agriculture and Water Resources Minister. But wait, there is more. When Senator Matthew Canavan was forced to stand down from his position as Minister for Resources and Northern Australia on July 27, 2017 –not an auspicious day for the LNP government, I would suggest- he commented on Facebook that 'It has been an honour to represent the Australian **MINING** (my emphasis) sector over the past year.' Not the Australian people. Not the people of Queensland. No, this minister openly stated that he was working for the **MINING** industry. Now I ask you, how can there be such a blatant misuse of ministerial power and for there to be no consequences for those actions? Hence, it is my recommendation that instead of focusing on ENGOs who are seeking to protect our environment and our beloved flora and fauna, that you turn your eyes to the current government and issue a Discussion Paper on the abuse of power by sitting government members and put forward a series of suitable sanctions that could be applied when it has been proven that those ministers are **NOT** working on behalf of their constituents but instead seeking to promote the interests of financial donors! Oh, and as far I know, civil disobedience still has not been outlawed in Australia and when protesters act to stop the destruction of our countryside, and protect endangered flora and fauna, they are simply exercising their democratic rights. And thank goodness for that because otherwise we

would have the horror of Coal Seam Gas (CSG) here in Victoria but thanks to the tireless efforts of rural communities and ENGOs Victoria now has a permanent legislative ban on fracking. Yes!

Now, more than ever, The Australian people need and depend on ENGOs such as Lock the Gate, Greenpeace, the Australian Conservation Foundation, The Wilderness Society, Quit Coal, Environment Victoria, Birdlife, Friends of the Earth, The Australian Marine Conservation Society to stand firm against the environmental onslaught being 'unleashed' by the Federal and state governments and their fossil fuel and mining mates. Just because the LNP does not approve of their advocacy is not a legitimate reason to attack them and seek to cripple them with burdensome paperwork. As the Labor members mentioned in their dissenting report to the ROE inquiry 'Members of the public who receive the benefit of a tax deduction if they chose to donate to an environmental organisation are contributing to a **PUBLIC GOOD** (my emphasis). This contribution is believed to enhance political engagement and representative democracy, and also to give a voice to those outside parliament.' On many occasions I have family responsibilities to fulfil and so I am unable to attend peaceful non-violent protests or write the appropriate letter or submission but I can donate and I do, to all the above, knowing that these ENGOs have the well-being of all Australians at heart, not just those with big fat cheque books who see only short term gain and deliberately obfuscate the consequences of their lust for fossil fuels and minerals. These ENGOs speak on behalf of the Great Barrier Reef, the Great Australian Bight, the Kimberley, the Tarkine, the Northern Rivers, the Hooded Plover, Barnaby's Black Cockatoo, the Leadbeater possum, our koalas, the Black-throated Finch, the Southern Brown Bandicoot, all of which have a voice, but unfortunately not one that can be heard in a court of law. Our ENGOs stand in their place and give them a voice and hopefully a future in our country as we prepare to face the onslaughts of drought, ocean acidification, desertification, bushfires, loss of food production and water stress in a world where temperatures are now 1.1C higher than in pre-industrial times and CO2 emissions are now 408 ppm as opposed to 300 ppm pre-industrial times.

I make no apology for the tone of my submission. The LNP government has treated the people and the environment of Australia with the utmost contempt for the past 4 years and I am simply repaying the favour. This Discussion Paper is a ruse to gag the voice of ENGOs and I am outraged that the LNP is using Treasury to try and do its dirty work. By rights, the Minister for the Environment should be chairing this discussion but I am all too well aware that Mr Josh Frydenberg is focused on far more important issues, namely spruiking the necessity of CSG in view of our 'manufactured' gas crisis and the bullying of those states who have dared to introduce a ban on that nefarious activity. And just for your information, this is yet another example of the blatant corruption of the LNP and one of the reasons why ENGOs are fighting so hard at the moment to save our environment, namely, because the Minister for the Environment is actively working **AGAINST** the best interests of the environment and not **FOR** it!

In conclusion, I would submit that this is a flawed Discussion Paper and one guided by vested interests who want to shackle the valuable work of ENGOs. This Discussion Paper is

an insult to ENGOs, their members and their volunteers and I submit in the strongest terms possible that **NONE** of the proposals put forward in the paper merit action.

Sincerely,

Christine Price.