

[REDACTED]

From: ILONA LERNER [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 4 August 2017 3:37 PM
To: DGR Inbox
Subject: 'Tax deductible gift recipient reform opportunities discussion paper' - submission

This is my submission in response to the 'Tax deductible gift recipient reform opportunities' discussion paper.

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposals outlined in the 'Tax deductible gift recipient reform opportunities' discussion paper.

1. I am against changes to DGR tax arrangements that limit or restrict environmental advocacy.
2. Organisations should be free to set their own priorities and choose how to best spend their funds in order to achieve their goals and outcomes that are in line with their stated mission and values, and which their donors support.
3. The community, including myself, expects environmental groups to be strong advocates for environmental outcomes. Advocacy to improve environmental policy and outcomes is about preventing damage from happening in the first place, rather than cleaning up the mess or fixing the damage after the fact. In fact it is outrageous to require environmental groups to remediate the damage and destruction caused by others those government allows to do so.
4. In fact advocacy for better policy to prevent environmental damage is by far the most efficient expenditure of funds by environmental groups compared to the cost of repairing future environmental damage after the fact.
5. 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 just through on-ground environmental remediation.
6. The Inquiry and discussion paper create a false dichotomy between remediation and advocacy. On-ground work often needs supporting policies or funding from government, which may only arise as a result of advocacy.
7. That the government takes such a narrow view of environmental protection is unacceptable. Worse is the attempt to dictate and restrict the activity of conservation organisations, funded by members who support environmental advocacy.

8. The benefits of education, advocacy and other community services provided by not-for-profit (NFP) organisations are currently recognised and valued by the public and government. To ensure we remain a democratic society, it must stay that way and environmental groups should not be interfered with, whether through changes to DGR laws or otherwise, in doing their work.

9. Environmental advocacy is in the public interest. It enhances environmental decision making and accountability and drives policy reform. The Australia Institute conducted national polling and found that almost 70% of Australians support environmental advocacy.

10. It's clear the motivations of those behind the discussion paper aim to silence NFPs, which would significantly reduce their impact and damage civil society as a whole. NFPs should have the freedom to choose how they spend their earned funds, so long as its in line with their stated mission, goals and values.

11. Australian politicians and people deserve to hear from more than just big business. Scientists and individuals from all generations need to have a voice. Decision makers should not be solely influenced by industry expert lobby teams.

Please ensure DGR status isn't used as a political tactic to control, restrict or silence advocacy groups.

Yours sincerely,

ILONA LERNER

