

From: [Michael Meadows](#)
To: [DGR Inbox](#)
Subject: Inquiry into the deductible gift recipient status of charities
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To the inquiry team

I want to voice my strongest objections to any planned changes to the existing status of environmental organisations registered as charities. I understand from media stories that one suggestion is that such organisations be compelled to spend their own money (from donors like me) to clean up the environmental mess created by irresponsible developments, including but not confined to mining operations. It is an outrage to suggest that money freely donated to such organisations should be forcibly sequestered in this way. It is akin to asking each one of you on the inquiry team to donate some of your own salary to help to sort out an administrative mess in another department. Would any of you do that? Clearly, that is nonsensical and anti-democratic.

This inquiry and the suggestion I alluded to above appears to be politically motivated to try to limit the excellent work of organisations I regular support, including the Mackay Conservation Group, the Wilderness Society and the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland. Without such groups, the Australian environment would be far worse off as anyone with any knowledge of the history environmental activism here would know. The destruction of the iconic areas such as the Franklin River, untold hectares of old growth forest in Tasmania and New South Wales, and the Great Barrier Reef has been either stopped or at least slowed only by the intervention of locally-funded environmentally conscious entities such as those I have already mentioned.

I lived through the corrupt Bjelke-Petersen era in Queensland working as a political journalist for part of that time and was well aware of plans — thankfully thwarted — to drill for oil on the Great Barrier Reef. Is it fair that environmental organisations should contribute to cleaning up a resulting environmental disaster caused solely by such bad management and greed? Each time I donate, I know specifically how my contribution will be spent. This information is made available to me through special requests for a particular campaign, or through regular newsletters outlining organisation activities. More importantly, these organisations provide background information, drawn from their vast array of experts, that is simply unavailable through existing public media in all but a handful of situations. I worked as a journalist for more than a decade and I know how information is managed in the public sphere. I do not want my money redirected to fix up a mess created through bad management and/or inept government regulation.

This may strike you as an emotional response — and it is — because it is the future we are talking about here. Climate change is real, despite the protestations of the Flat Earth society, unfortunately over-represented in conservative politics in Australia in 2017. I support these environmental groups because I have no faith in any but a handful of the current crop of politicians at both state and federal level — regardless of political affiliation — to put the environment before their own greedy vote-seeking policies. The current mindless approach in placing jobs above the environment at any cost is simply not sustainable in the long term.

How will we explain to generations to come why we did so little to ensure the future of our increasingly fragile environment? How will you explain it to your children?

Choosing to punish the only organisations in the country who are well-informed enough to alert us to the dangers is not a solution. It's akin to shutting the gate after the horse has

bolted. It would seem far more appropriate to ensure that environmental transgressions don't occur in the first place. Appropriate, strictly enforced guidelines with commensurate penalties — including companies lodging a bond, very much like those in rental properties — might help to deter bad or illegal behaviour. Picking on soft targets like charitable groups will not stop environmental disasters — only good policy and strict regulation will achieve that aim.

Forcing charitable organisations of the type I have identified here to pay for the mistakes of others is akin to a penalty and will undoubtedly force some to the wall with donors (including me) reluctant to pick up the tab for the environmental mistakes of others. Tax concessions, if anything, should be extended to enable them to remain as the only bulwark against bad policies enacted by ill-advised and poorly-educated politicians. They remain the only politically-independent voice on what is arguably our most critical resource — our planet; our home.

It is government at all levels that sets the regulations for development and for policing the processes involved. If this fails, it should be the responsibility of government to clean up the mess.

Yours sincerely

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