

Submission on Tax DGRs Reform Opportunities. July 2017.

Summary:

I am an environmentalist; a retired ex-physicist, charity donor, private researcher, volunteer advocate, submission writer, bushwalker, field investigator, bushcare labourer, activist, member of environmental groups and householder. These activities and the frustration that drives them intrude on my time, my septagenarian energies, my freedom for recreation and my pension.

All this is a consequence of my overriding responsibility to pass onto my grandchildren's generation a planet and country as wonderful as the one I have enjoyed. Recently that has been an uphill battle with threats and discouragement at every turn. Once a scientist, always a scientist so in assessing such threats as real I rely on informed observation, evidence, analysis, reporting and discussion with colleagues (two of whom were awarded O.A. for physics and medical physics).

I am sure that this profile puts me and the organisations receiving my donations squarely in the cross-hairs of these "Deductible Gift Recipient" reforms. The issues pursued by these organisations include various aspects of nature conservation, political prisoners, international crisis relief, volunteer firefighters, refugee rights, medicine in underdeveloped countries, climate change and education for underprivileged kids. Without tax deductibility, the support I would be able to provide for such work would be cut by about a third and so I expect would that of others.

These deductibility claw-back "reforms", so-called, are not justified on the grounds of public interest economics or even fiscal balance. They ignore the economic value of volunteer work done by colleagues and myself and the organisations whose Deductible Gift status is being challenged. We assert that this value is as often derived from submissions and/or street, political and legal action to *stop* a corrupt or counter-productive project as it is to pull weeds or pick up rubbish, important as that is. Either way, the result of an unlogged forest, an undammed river, protection of an agriculturally vital aquifer, a preserved historic building or street trees, an unpolluted water catchment, reduced Greenhouse Gas emissions or the survival of a threatened species or a Barrier Reef, will save and in many cases has saved Australia money and international reputation damage, enriched our community and prevented irreversible loss of amenity.

We all understand that opposition to donation tax deductibility for environmental organisations is motivated by pressure from lobbyists for exploitative "bulldozer" businesses such mining, fossil fuels, native forest logging, land-clearing, water diversion, urban development or urban retail centres. The organisations that I support project a vision for a better, caring and more humane world, greater environmental understanding, a cleaner technology and economy and a richer environment for all succeeding generations.

Possibly of equal importance is that in helping to achieve that vision such organisations keep alive the hope and civic pride that is vital for a cohesive democracy, offsetting the dismay and cynicism that regularly arises in response to self-interest, corruption or stupidity in politics. Please do not destroy this valuable asset.