

Political deal between PUP, ALP and Greens senators puts 'one stop shop' on the backburner for mining and industry

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The mining industry is grappling with the impact of the likely end of the so-called 'one-stop-shop' environmental approvals, which would have given state governments most of the final say over developments.

The changes to the Environmental Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act, which applies to all business and developments, were expected to save \$1 billion by slashing red and green tape.

Both the Federal Coalition and the former ALP government have been considering changes to the EPBC Act for more than a decade, moves that were resisted by the Greens.

Now in return for the Greens and Labor helping them secure an investigation into conduct by the Queensland Government, the Palmer United Party (PUP) has provided the numbers to stop the proposed changes to the Act.

Despite the major setback, Kane Moyle, manager for environment and land access with the Western Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy, hopes the Senate may yet reconsider.

"There's been a significant amount of work that's gone into this already between state and territory governments and the Commonwealth, to ensure that assessments are done both rigorously but also efficiently.

"So we'll be encouraging all Senators to have another look at this to ensure the legislation that enables this can be passed."

Business Council says the deal puts Australia's future at risk

The Business Council of Australia has described the deal as a 'backward step for Australia's competitiveness and job creation and a loss for the environment and the economy'.

CEO Jennifer Westacott says the one-stop-shop for approvals was recognised by all governments as 'the right way to go'.

"Half the states and territories already have agreed to bilateral agreements with the Commonwealth.

"These reforms are critical to Australia's ability to bring on the next wave of investment in major resource projects and to ensure major infrastructure projects can be successfully delivered.

"While Australia's competitor countries are undertaking serious economic reform in their long-term national interests, we have a situation where policymaking is uncertain, unpredictable and subject to political horse trading behind the community's back.

"The PUP and Greens have made a deal that puts Australia's competitiveness, investment and jobs at risk."

Greens get the veto they're after

The Greens have long argued that state governments are too compromised to have oversight of environmental decisions.

Greens Senator for Queensland, Larissa Waters, says the Federal Government had tried to wash its hand of its responsibility to the environment by making changes to the EPBC Act.

In particular, she says, a Senate inquiry into environmental offsets showed they weren't effective.

Environmental offsets are areas set aside by businesses, mining, oil, gas and infrastructure companies to compensate for land lost to their operations.



PHOTO: The EPBC Act covers tailings dams like this one at the Boddington gold mine, WA. An alliance of PUP, Greens and ALP Senators looks likely to end proposed changes to the act known as 'one-stop-shop' (Babs McHugh)

MAP: Perth 6000

Kane Moyle, from the CMEWA, says the Chamber is hopeful that the PUP will renegotiate with the Federal Government about changes to the Act.

Topics: mining-rural, mining-environmental-issues, mining-industry, government-and-politics, greens, federal-parliament, water, perth-6000

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