

Environment Bill labelled 'draconian'

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WA Liberal Senator David Johnston has condemned his own party's attempt to massively change the nation's environment laws by describing recently introduced legislation as appalling, draconian and in need of being sent back to the drawing board.

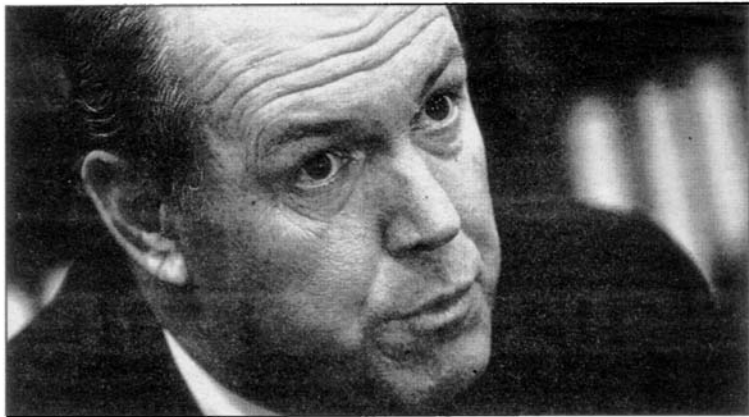
Environment Minister Ian Campbell last week lauded his proposed amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act as a means to reduce red tape.

But Senator Johnston attacked the legislation this week, saying it sought to give unprecedented powers of search and seizure against anyone remotely suspected of contravening the law.

"It discloses no motivation, no reasoning and no justification for some of the most draconian powers that this Parliament can conceivably and possibly enact — rights of search and seizure without warrant, rights of personal frisking without warrant," Senator Johnston said.

"This is under the umbrella of a piece of environmental protection legislation . . . I find that very interesting. "I think this legislation should go back to the drawing board."

Senator Johnston told *The West Australian* yesterday that he would make his point known in the party



Think again: WA Liberal Senator David Johnston has called on Environment Minister Ian Campbell to re-draft his environmental legislation.

room if the legislation was not re-drafted.

"Strip search powers without warrant is a bit over the top," he said. "They better take another look at this."

Acting Environment Minister Eric Abetz said the amendments only mirrored what was already in place in the Fisheries Management Act.

He said Senator Campbell would be happy to brief Senator Johnston on the rationale behind the legislation when he returned from China.

Greens leader Bob Brown described the legislation as a "horror Bill" because it sought to severely limit the public's role in nominating and protecting heritage listed areas.

Shadow environment minister Anthony Albanese said Senator Johnston's concerns highlighted that the 409-page Bill, containing more than 900 items, was hugely flawed and sloppy.

"The Bill curtails third party appeal rights, undermines public consultation and further politicises decision-making," Mr Albanese said. "It abolishes the right to appeal some ministerial decisions."

Labor also claimed yesterday that the Australian Greenhouse Office was not doing its job because it had under-spent its budget by \$362 million during its eight years of operation.

Senator Abetz said the under-spending was in fact a reallocation of funding for greenhouse gas reduction expenditure.