

# Letters

**The Hon Alexander Downer MP**  
**Minister for Foreign Affairs**  
**Parliament House**  
**Canberra ACT 2600**

November 8, 1996

**Mr Greg McIntyre**  
**President**  
**National Environmental Law Association**  
**PO Box 72**  
**BRADDON ACT 2612**

Dear Mr McIntyre,

I am writing to advise you of the appointment of Mr Howard Bamsey as Australian Ambassador to the Netherlands and the consequential relocation of the position of the *Ambassador for the Environment* from Geneva to The Hague.

This step recognises the important role which the Ambassador for the Environment plays in representing Australia's interests internationally. The government places particular importance on Australia's full participation in the international effort to address global environment problems and considers it essential to have its Ambassador for the Environment located where much international environment

activity is concentrated.

Since the establishment of the position in 1989 there has been rapid expansion in both the international environment agenda and the schedule of meetings which are held in a variety of locations. Against this background, there have been growing pressures on the Ambassador's workload, which has also included the role of Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva. In addition, in recent years there has been a shift away from Geneva of some significant international environment activity and policy making. The recent relocation of two of the major environment convention secretariats, those of the *Framework Convention on Climate Change* and the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, to Bonn and Montreal respectively, has reduced much of the previous focus on Geneva. The expected relocation of the *Desertification Convention Secretariat* will continue this trend.

At The Hague the Ambassador for the Environment will continue to have ready access to Geneva, which remains the home of a number of environment-related institutions and venue of some important environment meetings, and will have easier access to other key European centres such as Brussels and Bonn. The influential role the EU plays in international environment issues makes regular dialogue with key decision makers in these capitals a critical part of the Ambassador's role.

Location of the Ambassador in The Hague recognises the active part played by the Netherlands in EU and international environment activity. Combining the position of Ambassador for the Environment with that of Ambassador to the Netherlands will enable us to develop further the environment dimension of our bilateral relationship. The Ambassador will also be in a position to take maximum advantage of the increase in multilateral activity in The Hague which will follow the entry into force of the *Chemical Weapons Convention*.

In addition, the headquarters of one of the more active environment organisations, Greenpeace, is in easy reach of The Hague, in Amsterdam.

The priority the government attaches to international environment issues within the broader foreign policy agenda underlines Australia's strong support for international action to implement the provisions of *Agenda 21* and its commitment to securing outcomes in international environmental negotiations which are consistent with the full range of Australian interests. The transfer of the position of Ambassador for the Environment to the Hague, and the continuation of Mr Bamsey in that position, will ensure that Australia is very well equipped to continue its active role and attain its objectives.

Yours sincerely,

**Alexander Downer.**

*(NELA's letter of reply will be published in AELN 1997)*

**National Environmental Law Association**  
Limited  
Representatives attending  
NGO  
**CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

NELA is represented on the Commonwealth Government NGO Consultative Forum which deals with development and implementation of international conventions, protocols and agreements. NELA is represented at the various forums by the following members:

Alan Bradbury	NGO Forum
<i>Deacons Graham &amp; James</i>	
Nelson Quinn / John Reynolds	Trade & Environment
<i>Environmental Consultant / Deacons Graham &amp; James</i>	
Richard Sharp	Desertification
<i>Australian Army</i>	
Nelson Quinn	CSD
Richard Sharp	Bio Diversity
Nelson Quinn / John Reynolds	Climate Change / Greenhouse
Nelson Quinn	Hazardous Chemicals / Pesticides

*Please contact Alan Bradbury - Telephone 06 274 0629 if you would like to make enquiries about the above or would like to be invited*