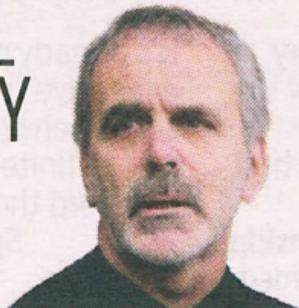


In defence of the public's environmental rights

MICHAEL
KENNEDY



The NSW Mineral Council's portrayal of the Environmental Defenders Office on this page yesterday was of course fanciful, and part of an ongoing scare campaign by industry and the NSW government to remove

what they see as a nuisance impediment to increased profits.

What the EDO really does is help thousands of individuals and local communities get access to free advice on protecting their rights and their environment.

The EDO allows the community its right to express concerns within the normal structure of a healthy democracy.

The gap that would be left in our public and environmental defences should the EDO be destroyed would be huge. But that is just what the O'Farrell government is doing with the help of industry and

organisations like the NSW Minerals Council, who wrote to O'Farrell last year saying: "We hope your government will therefore cease funding the EDO as a matter of urgency."

As the O'Farrell government continues to dismantle good environmental policy, it should not be unexpected that a concurrent target would be to deny free public access to legal advice.

Big industry and developers want a free hand to do as they please in this state and the government wants to help them. Getting rid of the EDO is a part of

their plan and your public rights will go with them.

EDO helped my organisation to successfully sue the Japanese company killing minke whales in Australian waters. Under the new regime being imposed by the O'Farrell government, this would no longer be possible.

The EDO must remain as a focal point of reference for a concerned public, desperate to be a part of future environmental planning processes.

Michael Kennedy is a director of Humane Society International

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