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Media release

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Federal Environment Minister Breaks Law and Ignores Science with Alpine Park Stunt

The Australia Institute today said it is highly likely that the Federal Environment Minister was breaking the law in delaying a decision on the national heritage listing of the Alpine National Park and labelled his announcement of a plan to create a Greater Alpine National Park a political stunt.

The available evidence indicates that the Minister received a copy of the assessment of the natural heritage values of the Alpine National Park from the Australian Heritage Council in early September. Once the Minister received the report he had 20 business days to make his decision, suggesting that he is now in breach of the law.

“It is highly unlikely that the cultural heritage values associated with the cattlemen in the Alpine National Park meet the criteria for inclusion on the National Heritage List”, Institute Research Fellow Andrew Macintosh said.

“Given this, we suspect that the Minister is delaying making the listing decision because he knows that he can’t list the park on the basis of the values associated with the cattlemen, which means he has no chance of stopping the Victorian Government’s efforts to remove cattle from the Alps.”

Institute Research Fellow Deb Wilkinson said that because the Minister was required to make a decision about the permanent inclusion of the park on the National Heritage List, the Australian Heritage Council was now required by law to release its assessment report publicly.

“We have made requests to the Council for the assessment to be released, but they have refused to respond.

“Our fear is that the Australian Heritage Council is now being drawn into the Minister’s political stunt to appease the cattlemen”, Ms Wilkinson said.

The Minister’s handling of the nomination of the Alpine National Park adds weight to The Australia Institute’s recent reports that have found the National Heritage List is being abused for political purposes.

The reports can be read under What’s New at www.tai.org.au.