



# Native Vegetation Survey Analysis Report

Prepared for

Office of Environment and Heritage  
(OEH)

August, 2012

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## Glossary

CMA	Catchment Management Authority
NSW	New South Wales
OEH	Office of Environment and Heritage
PVP	Property Vegetation Plan
RAMA	Routine Agricultural Management Activity

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## 1.0 Introduction

Coakes Consulting was engaged by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) to analyse responses from the Native Vegetation Regulation Survey, which was undertaken from late 2011 to early 2012. The survey was designed and implemented by OEH in order to obtain information from the community regarding their opinions, concerns and experiences relating to the NSW Government's regulation of native vegetation. The survey consisted of a number of multiple choice questions often followed by an open ended question to allow the respondent to provide more detail to explain their multiple choice response.

This report details the results of the survey, the methods of analysis and provides an outline of the key findings. The results of the analysis are divided into three sections as follows:

1. Community views of native vegetation regulation (all respondents) (Section 3.0)
2. Views of native vegetation regulation from rural land managers only and a comparative assessment of responses from rural land managers and other survey respondents (Section 4.0)
3. A comparative assessment of responses from rural land managers from coastal and inland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) areas (Section 5.0).

Key findings of the analysis are outlined at the end of the report to provide a concise summary of the main outcomes of the survey.



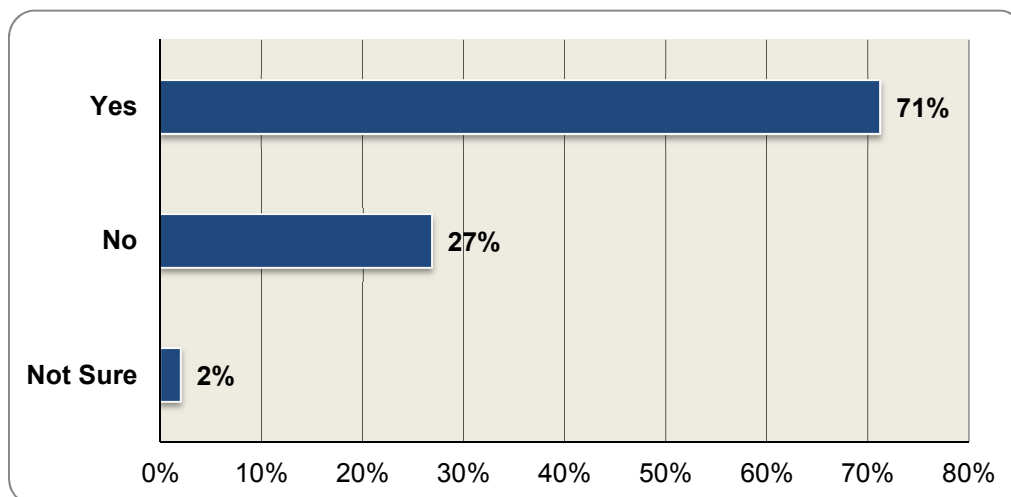
## 2.0 Method

The Native Vegetation Regulation Survey was designed and implemented by OEH (see Section 7.0 for a copy of the survey). Coakes Consulting was engaged by OEH to analyse the data from the survey. The majority of survey respondents completed the survey online and the remaining respondents either mailed or faxed in a hard copy of the survey. A total survey sample of 408 respondents was obtained through the methods outlined.

In some instances, individual Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) facilitated participation in the survey, for example by advertising the survey in their newsletter. Consequently, the method of survey distribution selected by OEH did not result in a random sample and potential biases resulting from the distribution procedure should be taken into account when interpreting the data. Furthermore, the survey process was uncontrolled in the sense that anyone could participate. This should also be taken into account when interpreting the data outputs.

### 2.1 Respondent profile

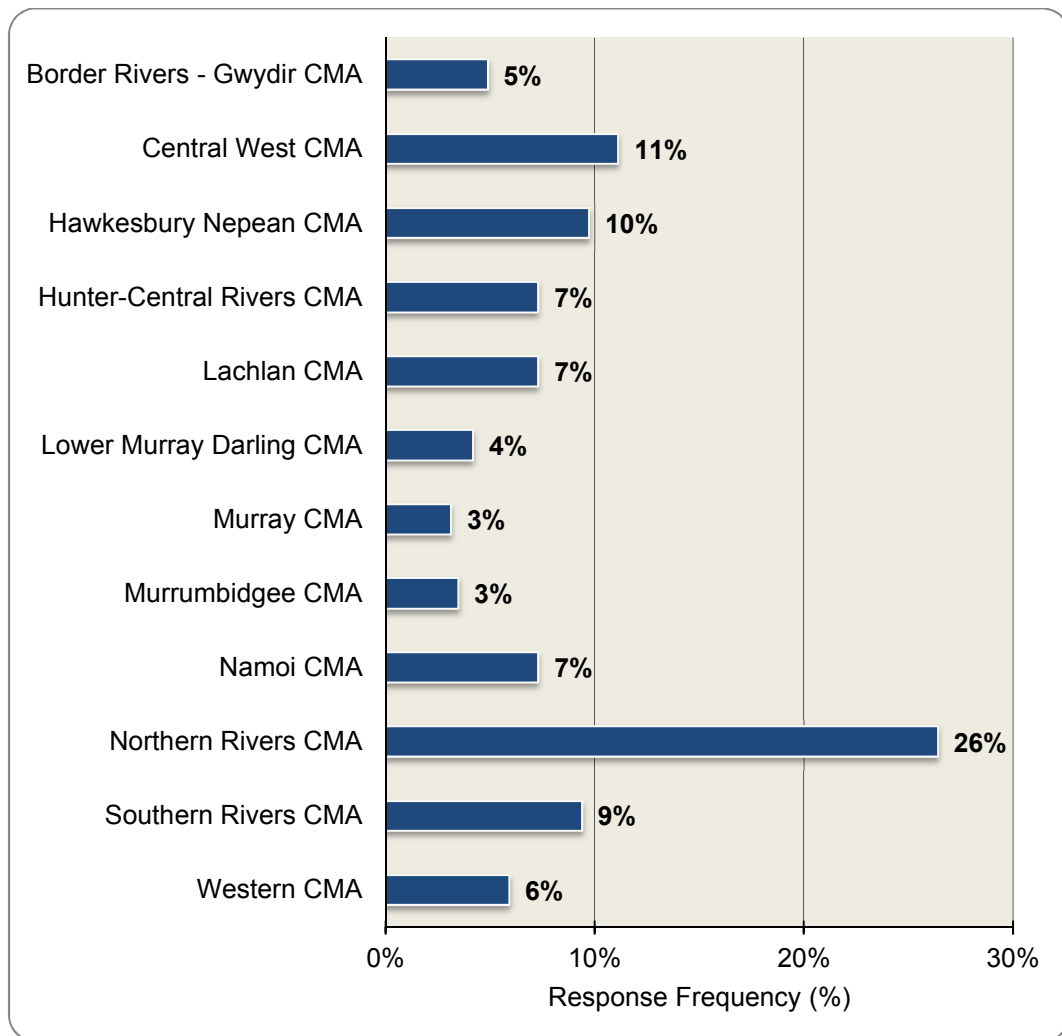
Survey respondents were asked whether they were directly involved in the management of a rural property. As shown in Figure 2.1, the majority (71%) of respondents were directly involved in the management of a rural property, while 27% of respondents were not.



*Note: Based on 403 respondents.*

**Figure 2.1: Are you directly involved in the management of a rural property?**

Respondents who indicated they managed a rural property were also asked for their postcodes, which were mapped according to respective Catchment Management Authority (CMA) areas throughout NSW. Figure 2.2 summarises respondents by their CMA area. The highest number of responses was received from the Northern Rivers CMA (26%) followed by the Central West (11%) and Hawkesbury Nepean (10%). Only those directly involved in the management of a rural property were asked for their postcodes and therefore it should be noted that the CMA breakdowns in Figure 2.2 are only based on around two thirds of the sample.



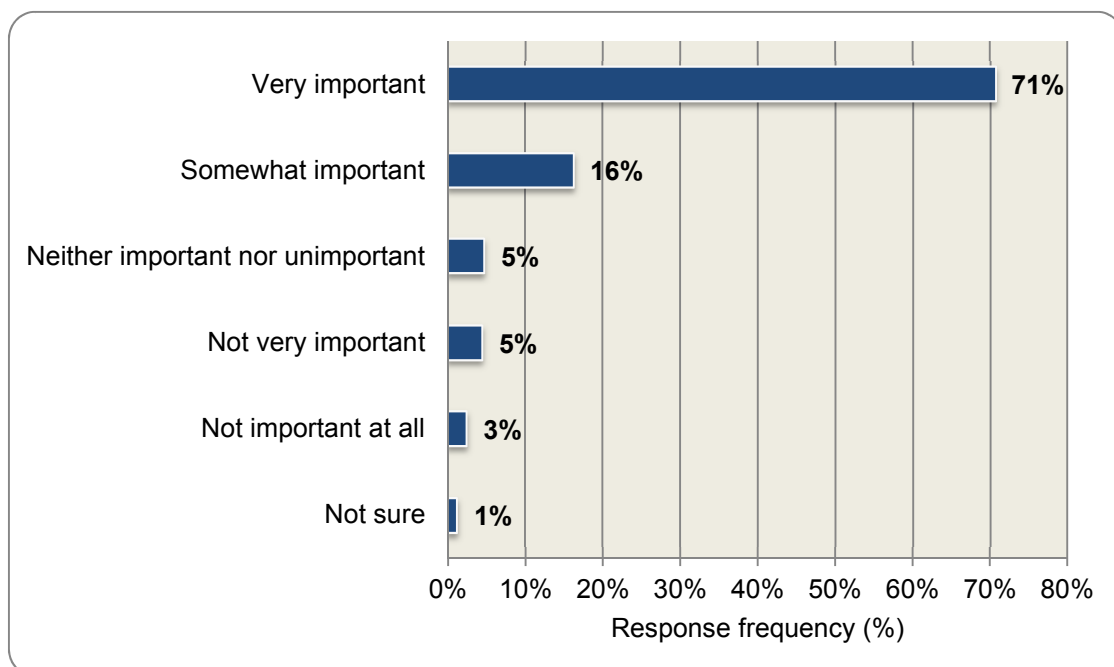
**Figure 2.2: Sample according to CMA areas**

### 3.0 Community Views of Native Vegetation Regulation

The following section provides the results for survey questions directed to all respondents regarding the importance of native vegetation and views on its protection and regulation. Findings for questions directed only to rural land managers and comparative analyses are provided later in Sections 4.0 and 5.0.

#### 3.1 Importance of native vegetation

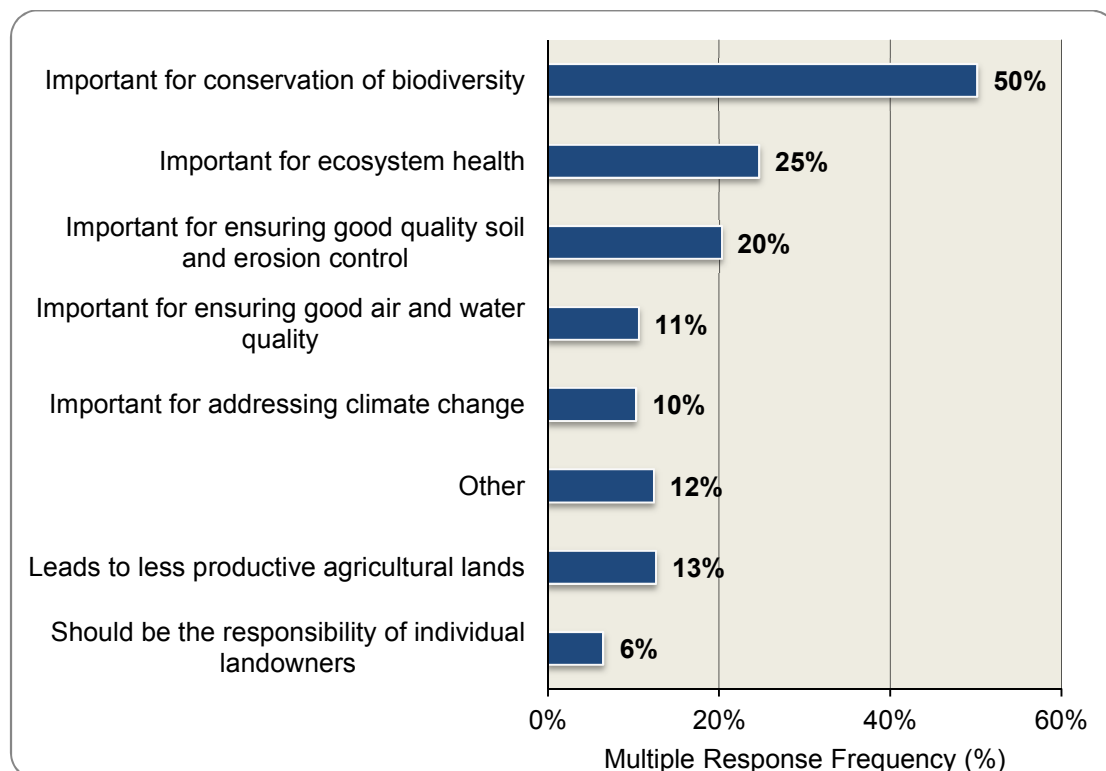
Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward native vegetation, including the importance of native vegetation. As shown in Figure 3.1, 71% of respondents felt that native vegetation was very important for the viability of agriculture in NSW, and a further 16% thought that it was somewhat important. This indicates a broad acknowledgement of the value of native vegetation in supporting viable agriculture.



*Note: Based on 399 respondents.*

**Figure 3.1: How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?**

When asked what influenced their responses (see Figure 3.2), 50% of respondents stated that native vegetation was important for the conservation of biodiversity, 25% said it was important for ecosystem health and 20% thought it was important for ensuring good quality soil / erosion control. A further 11% and 10% respectively thought native vegetation was important for ensuring water and air quality and addressing climate change – thus revealing a relatively detailed reasoning for the importance of native vegetation in viable agriculture. On the other hand 13% of respondents said they felt native vegetation led to less productive agricultural lands and 6% indicated that the land should be the responsibility of the individual land manager. Table 3-1 provides a selection of comments from respondents based on the categorisations presented in Figure 3.2.



Note: Based on responses to the question "How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?" There were 340 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents.

**Figure 3.2: What has made you feel this way?**

**Table 3-1: How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?  
What has made you feel this way? (Selected comments)**

Important for conservation of biodiversity (50%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Native vegetation provides homes for animals that provide environmental services for healthier pastures."</li> <li>• "Integral to conservation of biodiversity."</li> <li>• "Maintains the biodiversity and fertility of the land."</li> <li>• "Biodiversity on the farm creates many benefits for a horticultural enterprise, e.g. harbours many beneficial insects, pollinating insects, pest-eating birds &amp; mammals; native vegetation along the creeks helps to maintain water quality &amp; flow; native pastures/trees assist in soil management. Native forest/shelter belts generate many benefits to micro-climate (e.g. less frost, wind breaks)."</li> <li>• "The clearing of Native Vegetation is one of the biggest threats to biodiversity in NSW, and causes massive Land Degradation, soil erosion, soil acidity etc."</li> <li>• "Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services are vital to the survival of all species on Earth. As our Station has been in the same family more or less since 1880, we have had a decent time frame to determine the costs and benefits of certain land uses' in the landscape. For the last three decades, more focus has been directed to promoting perennial (Native Grasses) species along with other more dominant landscape over storey White Box, Yellow Box and Blakelys Red Gum trees."</li> <li>• "There has to be a balance in the natural environment as birds and insects are important in all farming operations."</li> </ul>	
Important for ecosystem health (25%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Without native vegetation ecosystem functions will breakdown."</li> <li>• "It is important to have healthy native veg so the natural ecosystem can function. Some areas of good quality native veg should be preserved but country that has been cleared and regenerated on poor soils is not good quality vegetation and often does not function as a healthy ecosystem."</li> <li>• "The ecosystem services that vegetation supply - clean air clean water, erosion control, soil biota etc."</li> <li>• "Without a healthy ecosystem, there will be a collapse in agriculture through the degradation of land and the loss of biodiversity."</li> <li>• "If we don't live in a healthy, diverse and functioning environment agriculture will cease anyway."</li> </ul>	

### Important for ensuring good quality soil and erosion control (20%)

- “Helps with erosion control.”
- “Veg = good soil.”
- “Excessive clearing has led to salinity, erosion and degradation.”
- “Destruction of the native vegetation leads to soil and water table damage.”
- “Land needs high proud cover to protect soil and slow run off, soil health, biodiversity and air quality.”
- “Native vegetation has its role in maintaining the integrity of the ridges to prevent erosion.”

Table 3-2 provides a more nuanced assessment of these responses comparing how important respondents believed native vegetation was for the viability of agriculture in NSW and their reasons for this response. For example, of the respondents who felt that native vegetation was neither important nor unimportant the largest group (24%) felt that native vegetation should be the responsibility of individual landholders. Interestingly, 5% and 18% of respondents who felt that native vegetation was very important for the viability of agriculture also stated that native vegetation leads to less productive agricultural lands. It is likely that in some cases, although respondents felt that native vegetation decreased the productivity of agricultural lands, they also felt that it was very important for other reasons.

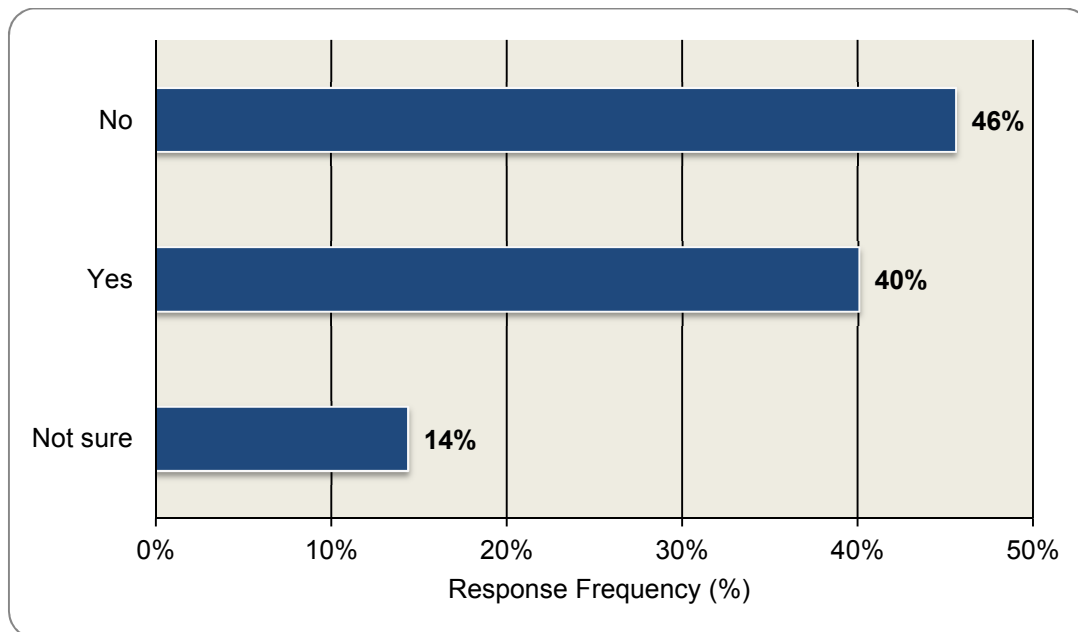
**Table 3-2: How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?**

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neither important / unimportant	Not very important	Not important at all	Not sure
Important for ensuring good quality soil and erosion control	14% (57)	14% (7)	16% (4)	6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Important for conservation of biodiversity	<b>36% (141)</b>	<b>36% (18)</b>	20% (5)	28% (5)	0% (0)	<b>50% (2)</b>
Important for addressing climate change	8% (31)	2% (1)	8% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)
Important for ecosystem health	20% (78)	8% (4)	4% (1)	6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Important for ensuring good air and water quality	9% (34)	2% (1)	4% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Leads to less productive agricultural lands	5% (18)	18% (9)	20% (5)	<b>33% (6)</b>	<b>56% (5)</b>	0% (0)
Should be the responsibility of individual landholders	2% (6)	10% (5)	<b>24% (6)</b>	6% (1)	33% (3)	0% (0)
Other	8% (30)	10% (5)	4% (1)	22% (4)	11% (1)	25% (1)

*Note: Based on 340 respondents. Multiple responses were allowed. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents that said native vegetation was very important, somewhat important, neither important nor unimportant, not very important, or not important at all for the viability of agriculture in NSW. The highest values in each column are bolded to highlight the importance of each category as rated by respondents. Raw numbers are in brackets.*

## 3.2 Regulation of native vegetation

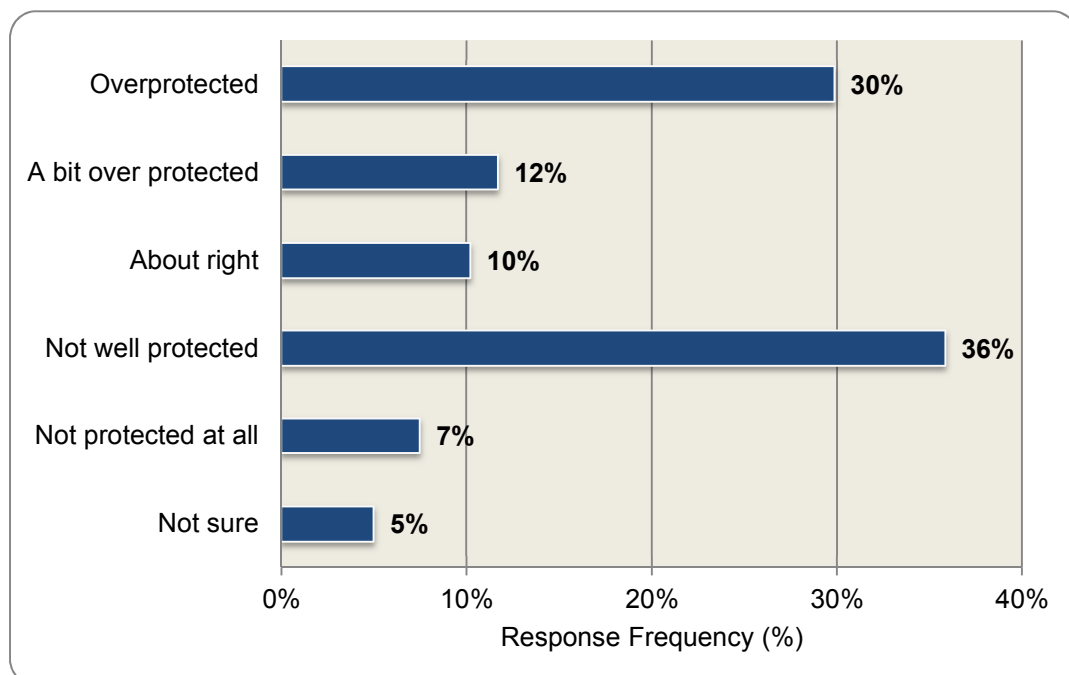
Figure 3.3 shows respondents' opinions regarding management of native vegetation while undertaking normal agricultural activities. Forty six per cent of respondents felt that the rules do not allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation so that normal agricultural activities could be undertaken. This suggests that many respondents do not feel there is sufficient flexibility in existing rules to support normal agricultural activities.



Note: Based on 397 respondents.

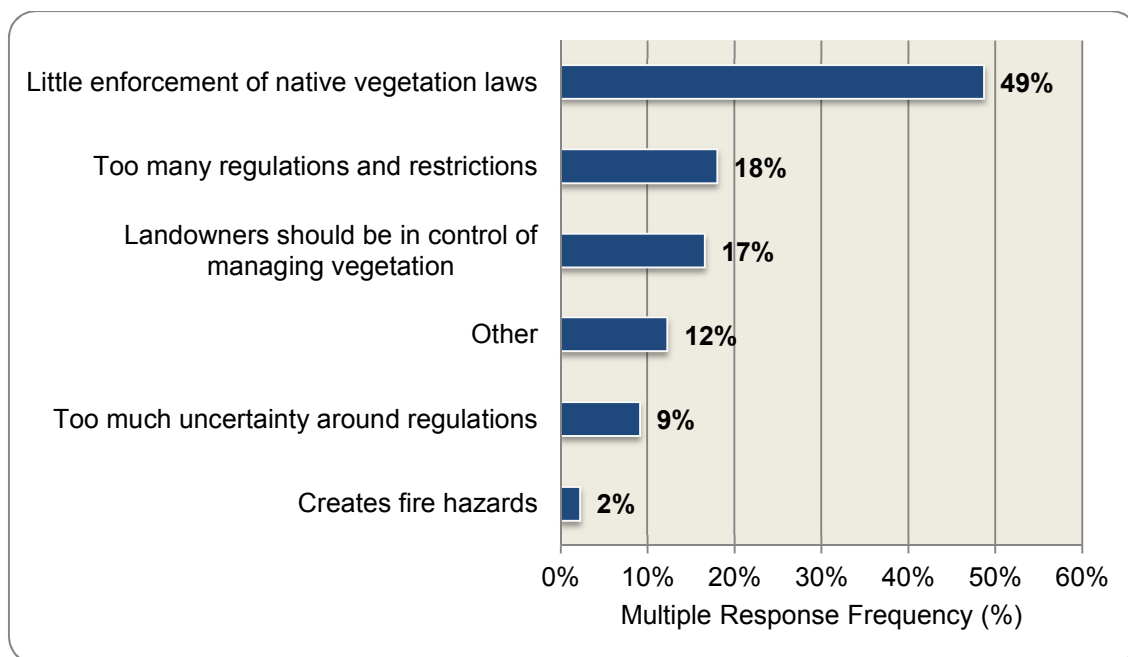
**Figure 3.3: Do you think the rules allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation, including clearing, so that normal agricultural activities can be undertaken?**

Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 show participants' opinions on the level of protection of native vegetation under current laws. Forty three per cent of respondents said it was not well protected / not protected at all. On the other hand 42% of respondents thought native vegetation was overprotected / a bit overprotected under the current native vegetation laws (see Figure 3.4). When providing more detail for their response, as shown in Figure 3.5, 49% of respondents stated that they felt there was little enforcement of native vegetation laws. Table 3-3 shows a selection of comments provided in response to this question.



Note: Based on 402 respondents.

**Figure 3.4: How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws?**



Note: Based on responses to the question "How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws?" There were 355 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents.

**Figure 3.5: What has made you feel this way?**

**Table 3-3: How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws? What has made you feel this way? (Selected comments)**

Little enforcement of native vegetation laws (49%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The legislation is there but there are still too many instances of clearing and not enough penalties."</li> <li>• "Fines should be made a lot heavier &amp; repeated offences should be made punishable by doubling the fines applicable."</li> <li>• "Illegal land clearing is ignored by authorities. Permission is granted to clear high conservation forests and native vegetation."</li> <li>• "I've seen too much clearing without any approvals in my local area. Perpetrators never seem to suffer any consequences - they wear any fine (if they get one to begin with) based on the fact that they have increased the economic value of their property through clearing. The only way to prevent this is by fining and requiring revegetation of the land they cleared."</li> <li>• "Large companies seem to be able to clear wherever they want (i.e. Coal Seam Gas)."</li> </ul>	
Too many regulations and restrictions (18%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Too restrictive and confusing for the management of any rural property."</li> <li>• "The restriction of our ability to manage our property as we see fit."</li> <li>• "Too much red tape. It would be simple to design a verifiable self-assessment system for 90% of PVP I am aware of."</li> <li>• "The fines for removing or destroying native vegetation are quite high compared to the fines for the damage or destruction to culture heritage. I have witnessed individuals being charged when they have broken the vegetation laws. I am yet to witness anyone being charged for the damage or destruction to culture heritage site. Most of the public are aware of the laws for native flora and fauna but not for cultural heritage."</li> <li>• "Too restrictive on releasing sound agricultural land for economies in scale of production - we are in a high dollar economy and under crushing competition from imports and every aspect of farm production has to be a peak economic efficiency for survival."</li> </ul>	
Landholders should be in control of managing vegetation (17%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Farmers are the best managers of the environment on rural land. Farmers look after the land, soil, and native vegetation for the next generation and don't need layers of regulations telling them how to manage their land."</li> <li>• "Farmers no longer have the right to manage the vegetation on their PRIVATE property."</li> </ul>	

- “Farmers are not allowed to manage the vegetation on their properties without asking and have to conform to legislation implemented by people who have no idea of farming or native vegetation but are just blindly following instructions.”
- “The vegetation on private land used to belong to that landowner. Most landowners will protect a reasonable proportion of their native vegetation for lots of reasons e.g. forestry, shade, aesthetics, fauna, flora etc. but it seems that if you do that the government comes and takes it away, so if you can, clear everything you can and plant exotic species before they take the rest of your rights.”
- “It stops landholders from using common sense about what they can and cannot do - most if not all farmers have the good of the land in mind when they farm and take offense that someone can tell them what they can do on their property.”

Table 3-4 displays a more detailed comparison of these responses against respondents' assessment of how well they think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws. Of the sample that outlined that native vegetation was not well protected or not protected at all, the main reasons for their assessment related to the lack of enforcement of native vegetation laws (78% and 72% respectively). In contrast, the respondents who indicated that native vegetation was either over protected or a bit overprotected, validated their responses by indicating that this was because there were too many regulations and restrictions and that landholders should be allowed to be more in control of managing vegetation.

**Table 3-4: How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws? What has made you feel this way?**

	Over protected	A bit over protected	About right	Not well protected	Not protected at all	Not sure
Little enforcement of native vegetation laws	12% (13)	15% (6)	<b>39% (11)</b>	<b>78% (113)</b>	<b>72% (23)</b>	25% (4)
Too many regulations and restrictions	29% (33)	<b>32% (13)</b>	21% (6)	6% (8)	3% (1)	13% (2)
Landholders should be in control of managing vegetation	<b>35% (39)</b>	29% (12)	4% (1)	2% (3)	6% (2)	6% (1)
Too much uncertainty around regulations	7% (8)	7% (3)	4% (1)	8% (12)	9% (3)	<b>31% (5)</b>
Creates fire hazards	3% (3)	0% (0)	4% (1)	1% (2)	6% (2)	0% (0)
Other	14% (16)	17% (7)	29% (8)	4% (6)	3% (1)	25% (4)

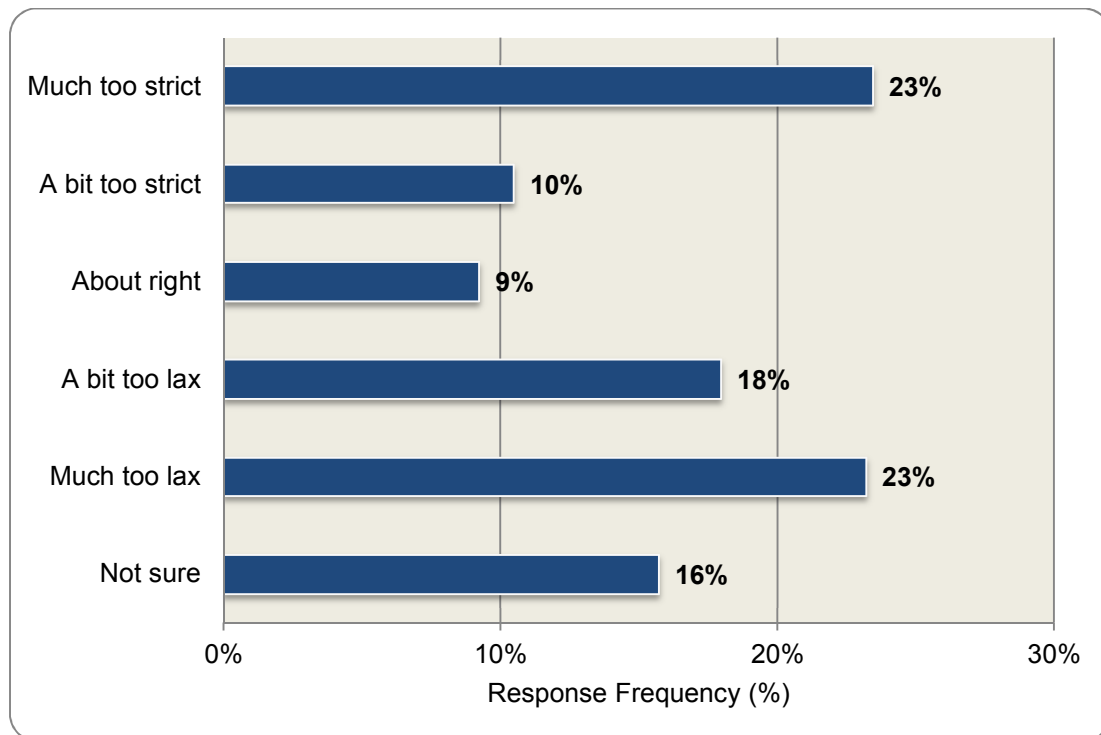
*Note: Based on 355 respondents. Multiple responses were allowed. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents that said native vegetation was over protected, a bit over protected, about right, not well protected, not protected at all, or were not sure. The highest values in each column are bolded to highlight the importance of each category as rated by respondents. Raw numbers are in brackets.*

### 3.2.1 Enforcement of native vegetation laws

Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.7 describe in more detail respondents' opinions regarding how native vegetation laws are enforced. Of the total sample, 41% said that enforcement was too lax and 33% felt that the enforcement of rules for native vegetation clearing was too strict (see Figure 3.6). Only 9% felt that enforcement was about right.

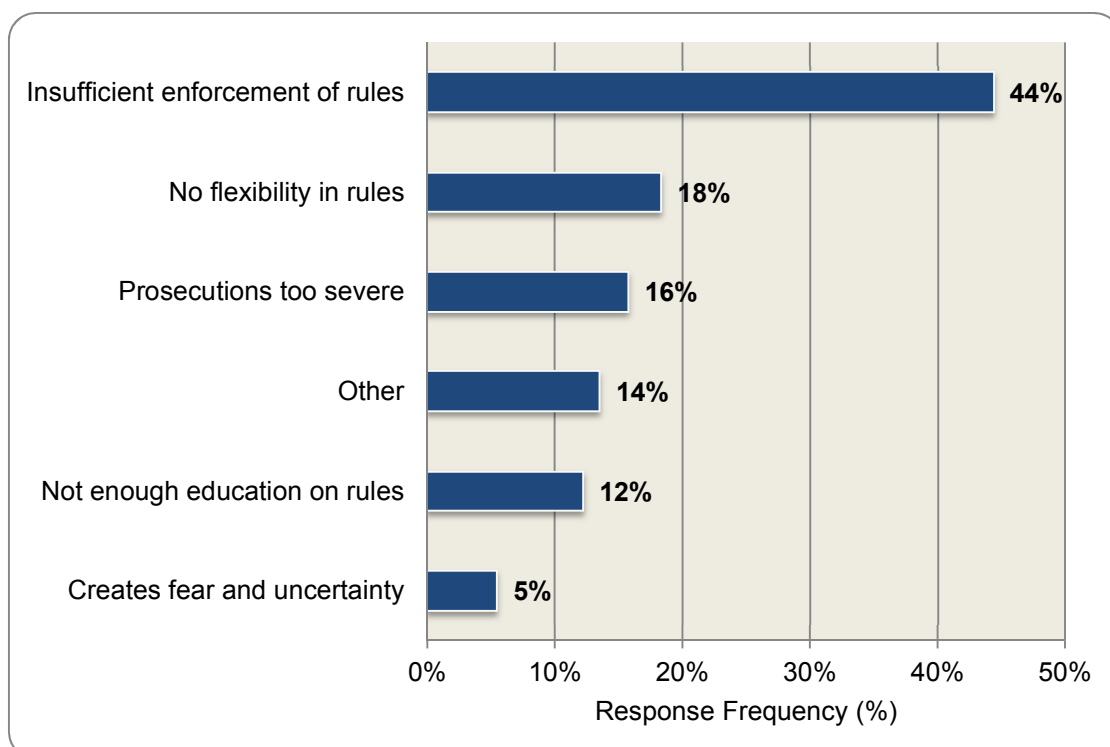
A total of 44% explained their response by stating that there was insufficient enforcement of rules. In contrast, 18% stated there was not enough flexibility in the rules and 16% felt that prosecutions were too severe. A further 12% felt that there was not enough education on the rules (see Figure 3.7).





*Note: Based on 401 respondents.*

**Figure 3.6: What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?**



*Note: Based on responses to the question "What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?" There were 327 respondents.*

**Figure 3.7: What has made you feel this way?**

Table 3-5 displays these responses according to how respondents felt about the way rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced. The responses indicate that the majority of respondents who found the enforcement of rules too lax felt that there was not enough enforcement of native vegetation laws, while several respondents who found the enforcement of rules too strict felt that the rules were not flexible enough, they created fear and uncertainty, and prosecutions were too severe. As would be expected, many respondents who stated they were not sure about how the rules for native vegetation were enforced also felt there was not enough education on the rules.

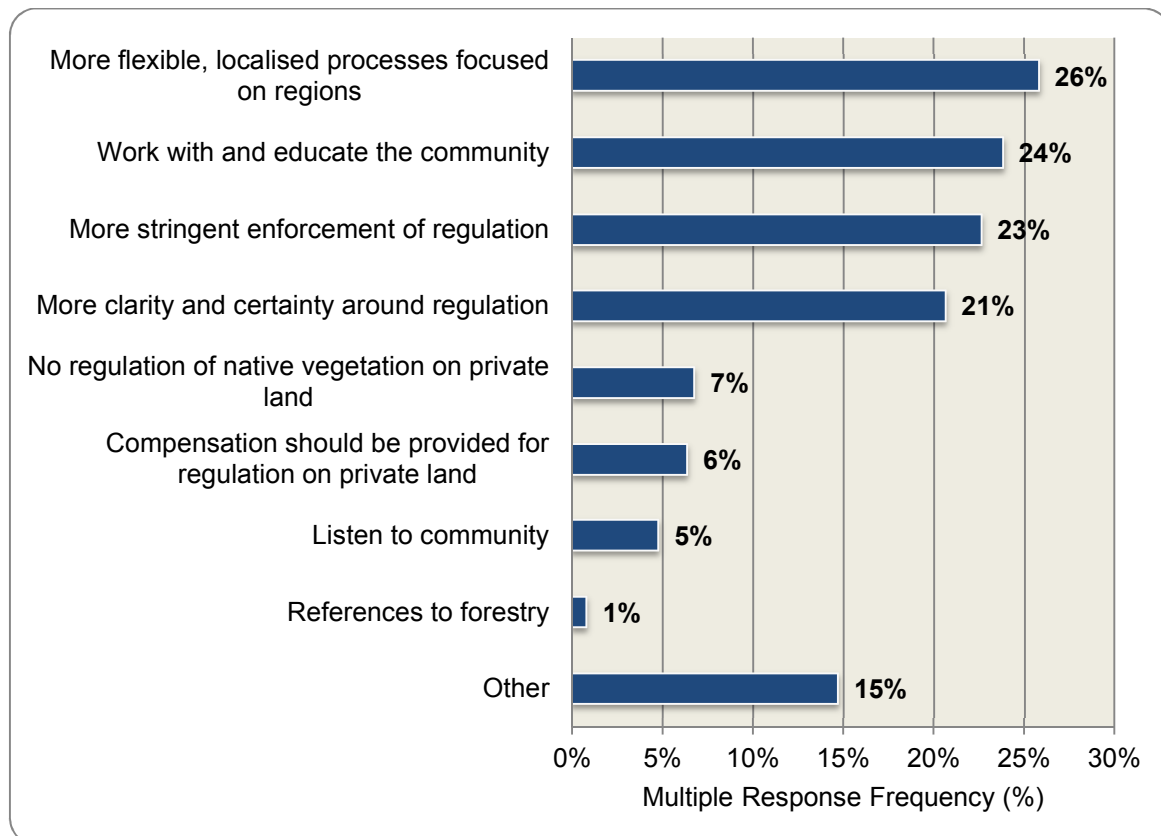
**Table 3-5: What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced? What has made you feel this way?**

	Much too strict	A bit too strict	About right	A bit too lax	Much too lax	Not sure
Insufficient enforcement of rules	6% (5)	11% (4)	29% (8)	<b>82% (50)</b>	<b>75% (59)</b>	25% (12)
No flexibility in rules	31% (27)	<b>28% (10)</b>	25% (7)	7% (4)	4% (3)	13% (6)
Creates fear and uncertainty	13% (11)	8% (3)	4% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (2)
Prosecutions too severe	<b>33% (29)</b>	31% (11)	7% (2)	3% (2)	3% (2)	6% (3)
Not enough education on rules	2% (2)	6% (2)	4% (1)	5% (3)	10% (8)	<b>44% (21)</b>
Other	16% (14)	17% (6)	<b>32% (9)</b>	3% (2)	9% (7)	8% (4)

*Note: Based on 327 respondents. Multiple responses were allowed. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents that said native vegetation was over protected, a bit over protected, about right, not well protected, not protected at all, or were not sure. The highest values in each column are bolded to highlight the importance of each category as rated by respondents. Raw numbers are in brackets.*

### 3.2.2 Respondents' suggestions for improvement to native vegetation laws

Figure 3.8 summarises the suggestions from all survey respondents with regards to improving the regulation of native vegetation. Many suggestions related to more flexible and localised processes focused on regions (26%), working with and educating the community (24%), better enforcement of regulations (23%) and more clarity and certainty around regulation (21%). Table 3-6 shows selected comments from respondents.



Note: Based on 261 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents.

**Figure 3.8: Please add any information that you feel would help us to improve the regulation of native vegetation.**

**Table 3-6: Please add any information that you feel would help us to improve the regulation of native vegetation. (Selected comments)**

More flexible, localised processes focused on regions (23%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Local input rather than a broad generic system."</li> <li>• "Native veg should be managed from a regional perspective not from a state perspective. Every region has different issues and are all different."</li> <li>• "Need for cumulative impact assessment and targeted regional programs rather than property by property."</li> <li>• "As stated each property needs to be looked at as an individual. The current laws bulk all properties and districts together."</li> <li>• "If you seem that a "one answer fits all situations" is too simplistic. To vary the regulation to allow for differences in soil type and topography would probably be an improvement."</li> <li>• "Empower authorities at the regional level (CMA's?) to determine appropriate management rules. Consult effectively with individuals and local landholder groups to develop mutually agreed outcomes."</li> <li>• "Take wildlife corridors &amp; buffer zones on each property into account when deciding how much clearing is suitable for each place."</li> </ul>
Work with and educate the community (19%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "More field officers to work with landholders - rather than against them."</li> <li>• "I believe there needs to be a more realistic approach taken to land management. Working with landholders to achieve goals, rather than the heavy handed approach which exists now."</li> <li>• "The attitude of different communities needs to be assessed and appropriate educational materials need to be produced and presented locally by local people."</li> <li>• "More personnel on the ground helping and educating on farming practices."</li> </ul>

- “EDUCATION to the wider public not just interested parties.”
- “Departmental officers with initial contact should be to educate and inform landholders of their rights and responsibilities. Departmental officers should be upfront and honest with landholders the department should be there to help not trap food producers.”
- “Provision of education services and greater involvement in extension services with field days.”

#### **More stringent enforcement of regulation (18%)**

- “Better surveillance, tougher penalties, less onerous legal prosecution pathways, better resourcing, more officers and more strategic compliance programs are needed to protect native vegetation and reverse the biodiversity/ environmental crises caused by clearing of native vegetation.”
- “Education of the public in regards to the rules and more people to enforce the compliance to the rules.”
- “More officer time available to monitor and investigate.”
- “Consistent systematic monitoring of condition of native vegetation; Regular reporting in the public arena of results of monitoring; More stringent application of current controls.”
- “There should be harsh penalties for illegal vegetation removal so that the risks are too great to even consider attempting it. Enough remnant vegetation has been cleared in this country, it should be a priority to protect what is remaining within reason. It is short-sighted to consider changing the legislation to make clearing easier.”
- “Give land managers an easy access point to notify the department of any breaches and then follow up with prosecutions otherwise all that is being achieved is community upset.”

#### **Other (6%)**

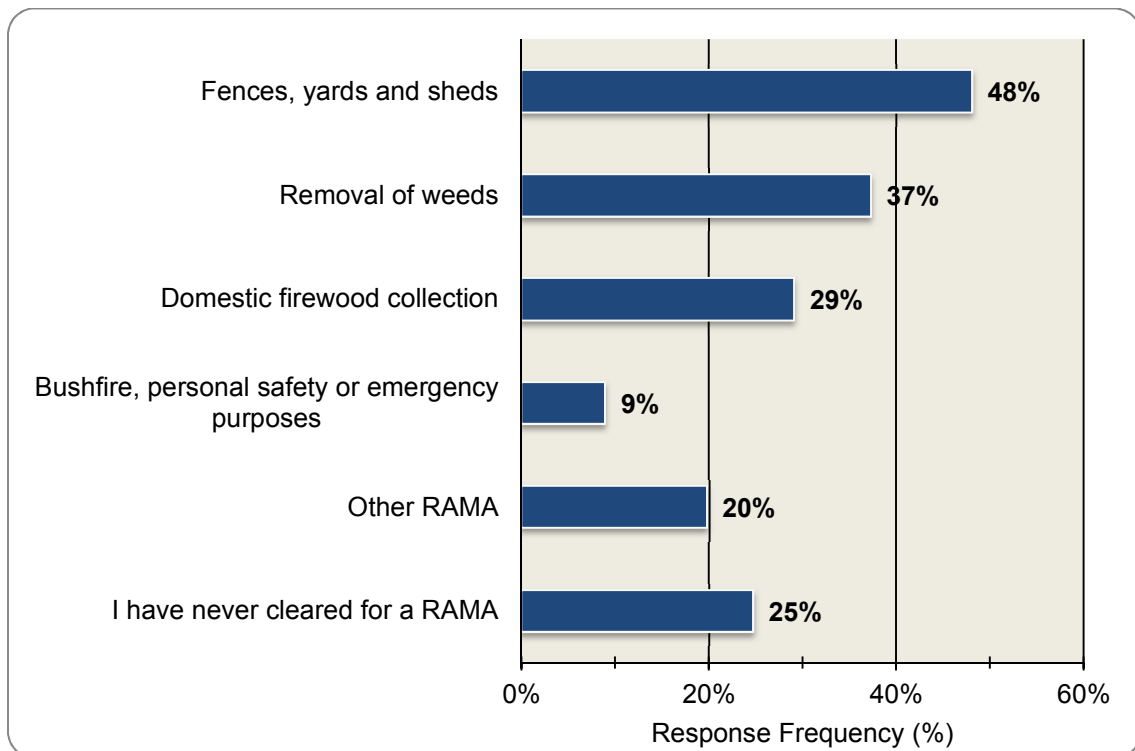
- “Employ more staff to process PVP's in a commercially timely manner as it impacts the land market.
- “Get rid of the magical 1990 date that decides whether regrowth can be cleared or not.”
- “I believe that agencies such as CMA's, State Forests etc. are understaffed. I also believe that there is still the tree hugger image out there, and that the extremists on both ends of the arguments about the environment in general, hinder gaining widespread community support for doing what we all should do and that is "Respecting and looking after what we have" Although I believe that Community Education is having a positive impact it only takes a negative political few to do quite a deal of damage, 1 step forward 10 steps back which is a shame.”
- “The aim should be about total area of native vegetation in the State - not about banning of clearing.”
- “Put all native veg legislation in one ACT. Have the Laws all come under the authority of one Dept.”

### **3.3 Respondents' views regarding Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs)**

The following section outlines the results of respondents' knowledge and perceptions relating to clearing for Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs). Where relevant, quotes have been included to supplement the data presented in the figures.

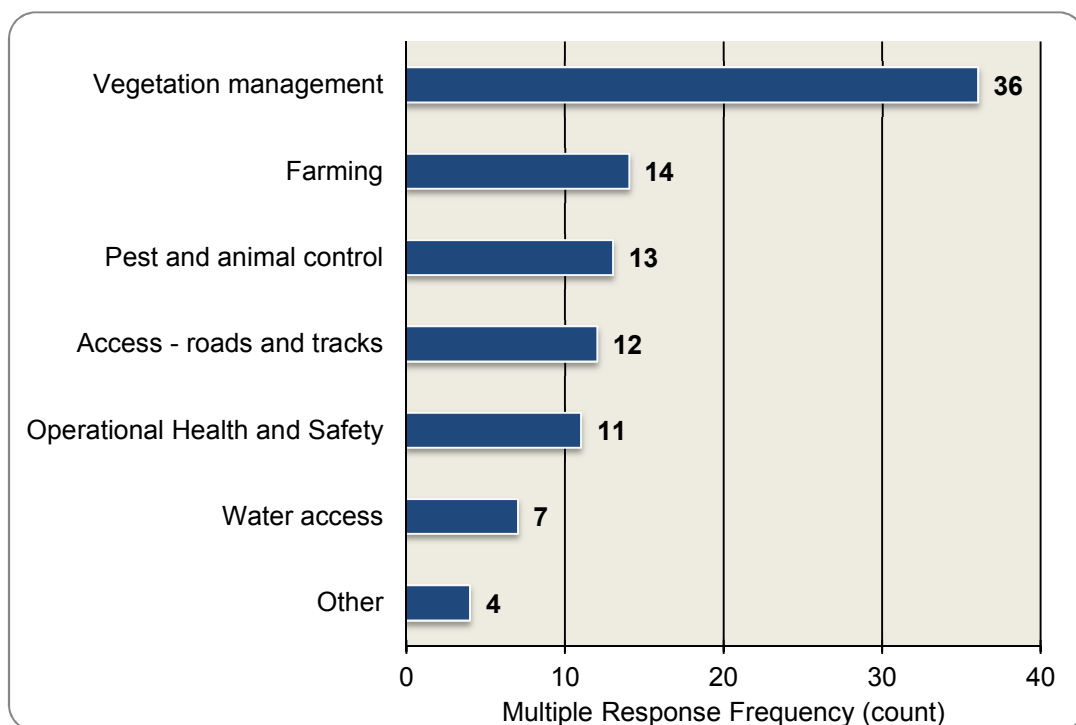
Figure 3.9 and Figure 3.10 outline the RAMAs respondents undertook in relation to clearing. Some of the RAMAs listed as “other” are not technically RAMAs (see Figure 3.10), while some RAMAs suggested by respondents are already covered by RAMAs listed in the multiple choice responses (see Figure 3.12). The fact they were raised as RAMAs by respondents may indicate a misunderstanding on the part of some respondents in undertaking the survey.

Most often (48%) RAMAs were used to clear for fences, yards and sheds, followed by the removal of weeds (37%) and domestic firewood collection (29%).



*Note: Based on 378 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents.*

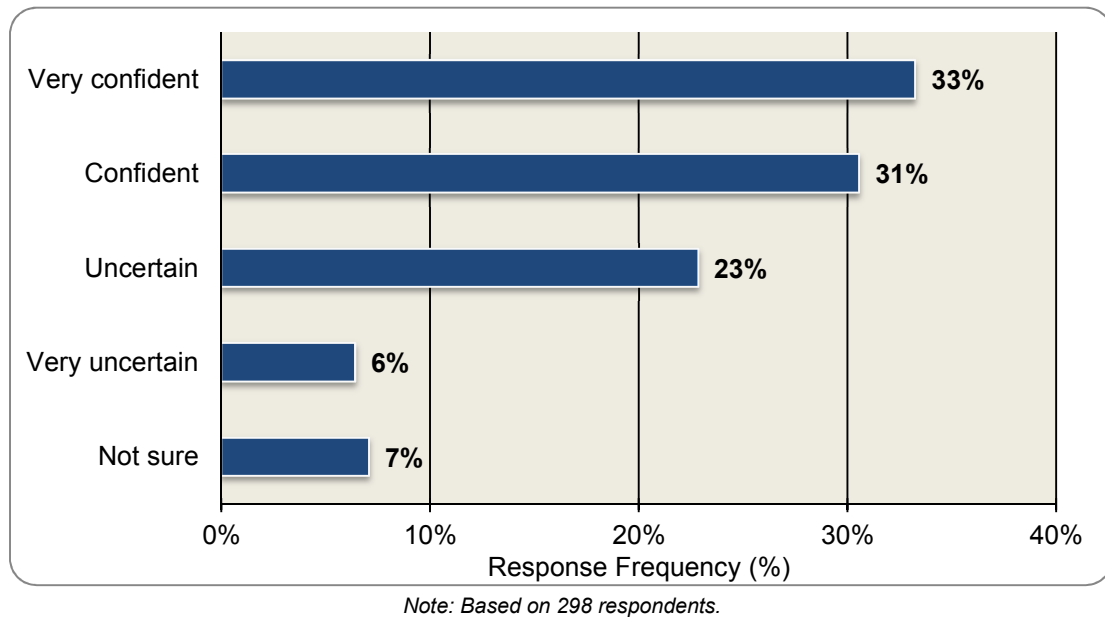
**Figure 3.9: Have you cleared for any of the following routine agricultural management activities, also known as RAMAs?**



*Note: Some of the activities identified by respondents and listed in the chart above are not considered RAMAs. Frequency counts are used here due to the small sample size of 73 respondents that answered "other" to the question "Have you cleared for any of the following routine agricultural management activities, also known as RAMAs?".*

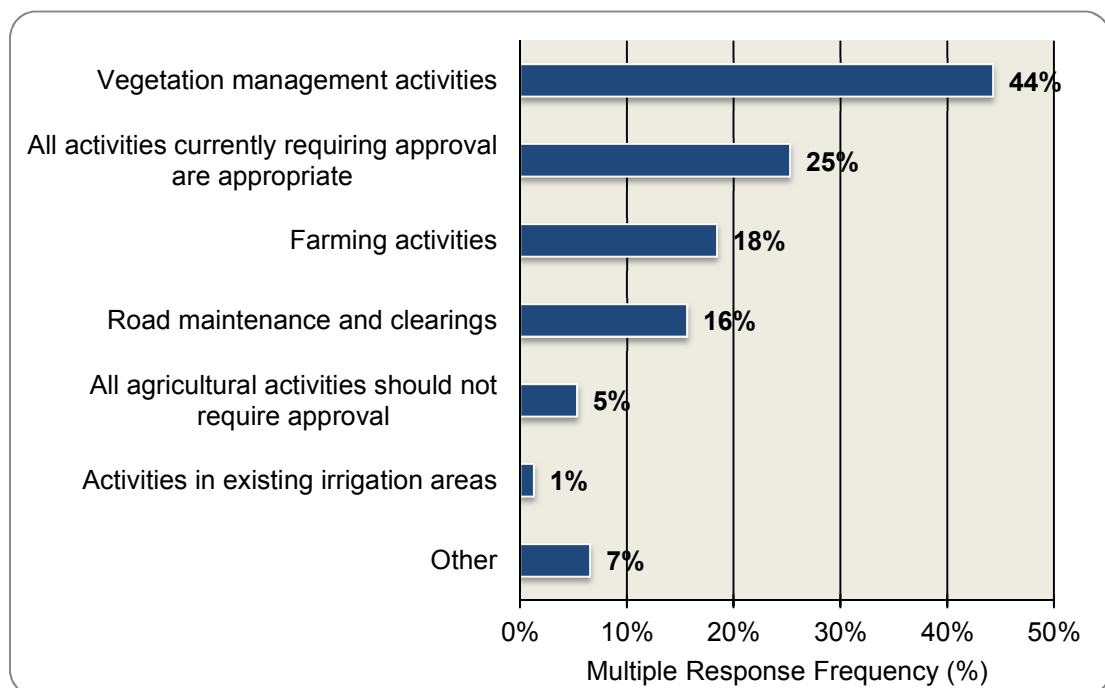
**Figure 3.10: Other RAMA, please specify.**

A total of 64% of respondents said they felt either very confident or confident that they understood what clearing was allowed when they were clearing for RAMAs. Only 29% were uncertain or very uncertain about what clearing was allowed (see Figure 3.11).



**Figure 3.11: When you cleared for a RAMA how confident were you that you understood what clearing was allowed?**

When asked what other activities should be considered as RAMAs, vegetation management and farming activities were frequently identified (see Figure 3.12). A total of 25% of respondents felt that all activities currently considered RAMAs were appropriate.



Note: Some of the suggestions provided by respondents are related to activities that are already considered RAMAs. Based on 323 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents.

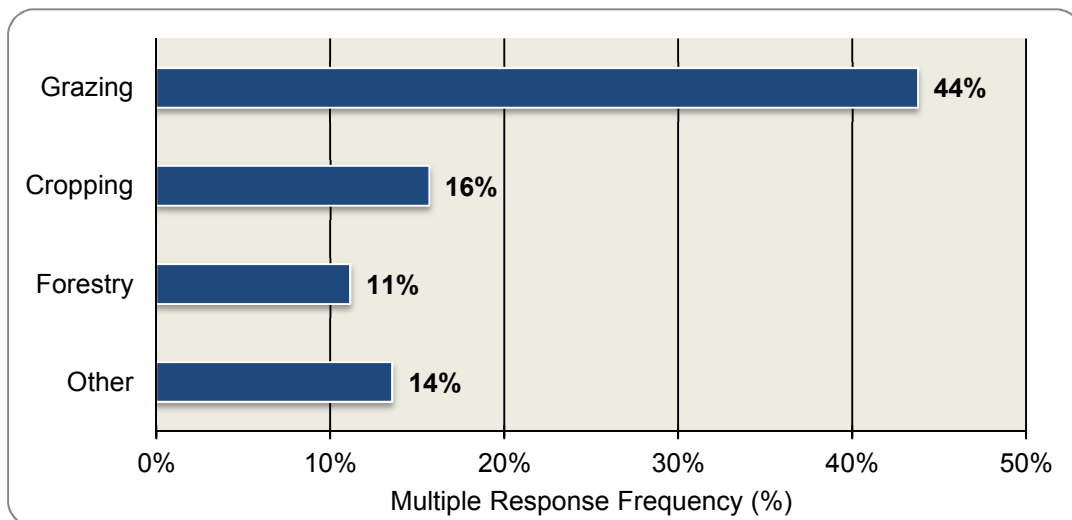
**Figure 3.12: What agricultural activities that require clearing of native vegetation do you think should be considered as RAMAs (and therefore should not require approval)?**

## 4.0 Rural Land Managers' Views of Native Vegetation Regulation

This section provides the results of responses provided by the 71% ( $N = 288$ ) of respondents who stated they managed a rural property and also compares rural land managers from coastal and inland areas. A comparison of responses from rural land managers and other survey respondents is provided in Section 5.0.

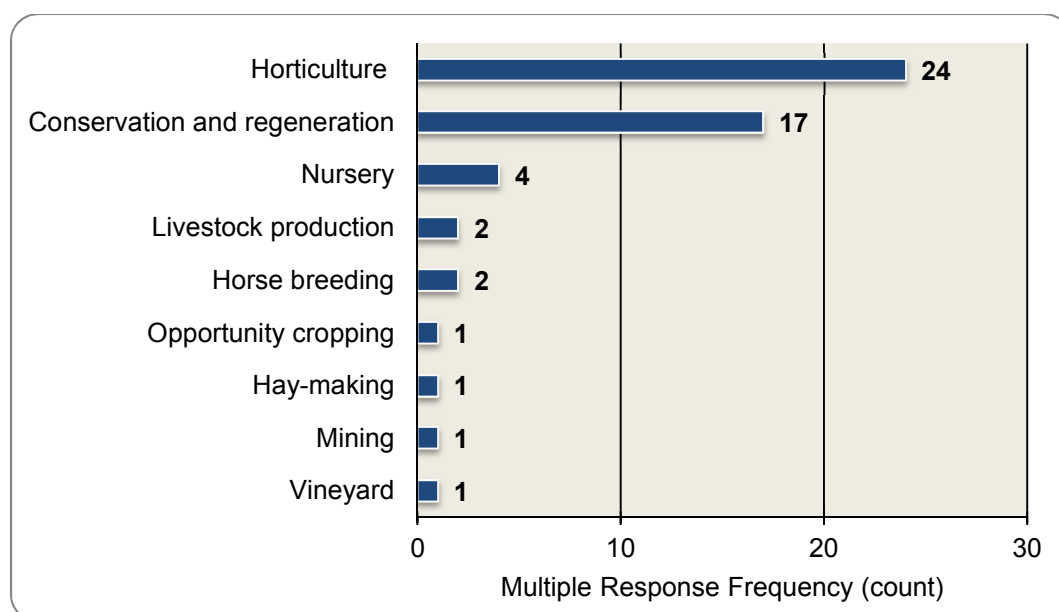
### 4.1 Rural land managers' profile

Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 detail the types of primary production undertaken by rural land managers on their property. The majority of respondents listed grazing (44%), followed by cropping (16%), and forestry (11%) (see Figure 4.1). A total of 14% stated other forms of primary production (see Figure 4.2), of which the majority were horticulture and conservation / regeneration.



*Note: Based on 163 respondents. Multiple responses will be permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who were rural land managers. There were 79 respondents who were not rural land managers that answered the question. These respondents were excluded from the analysis.*

**Figure 4.1: What form of primary production, if any, do you have on the main property you manage?**

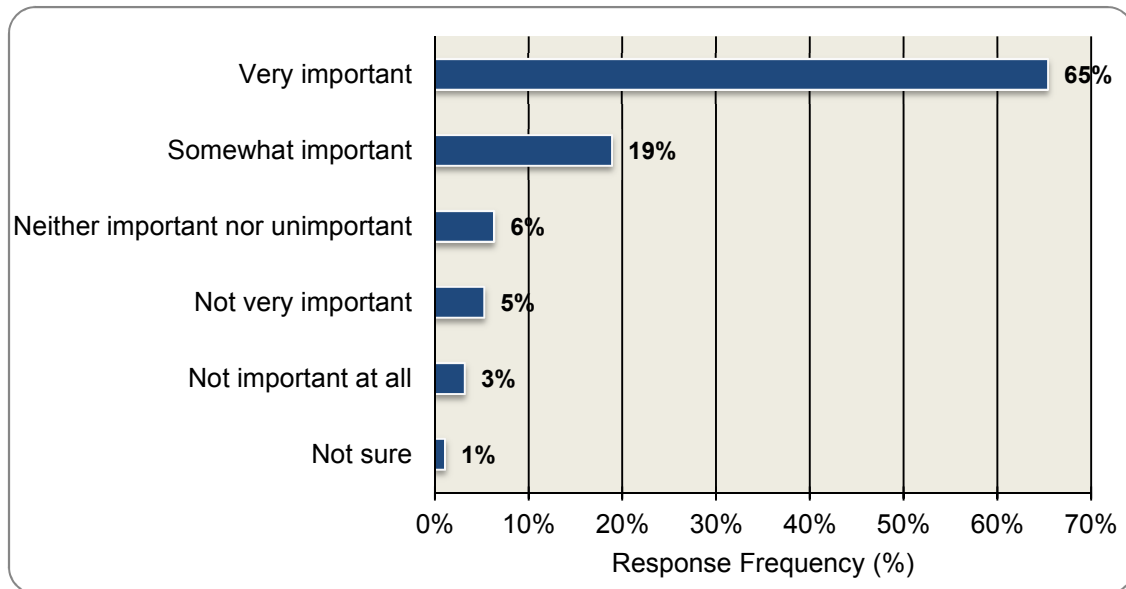


*Note: Frequency counts are based on the 53 respondents that answered "other" to the question "What form of primary production, if any, do you have on the main property you manage?" Multiple responses were permitted.*

**Figure 4.2: Other, please specify**

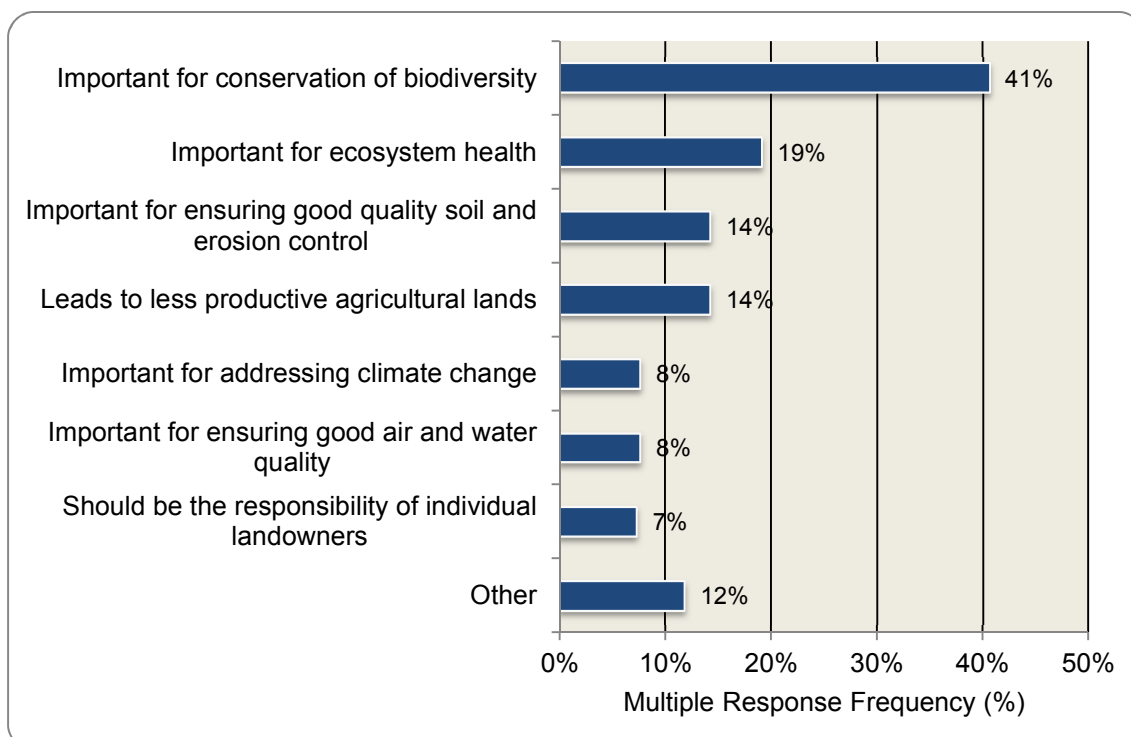
## 4.2 Importance of native vegetation

Rural land managers were asked about their attitudes toward native vegetation, including the importance of native vegetation. Figure 4.3 shows how important rural land managers believe native vegetation is to the viability of agriculture in NSW. A total of 84% of rural land managers stated that it was important, outlining reasons that included ensuring good quality soil and erosion control (41%), and importance for ecosystem health (19%) (see Figure 4.4).



Note: Based on 286 respondents.

**Figure 4.3: How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?**



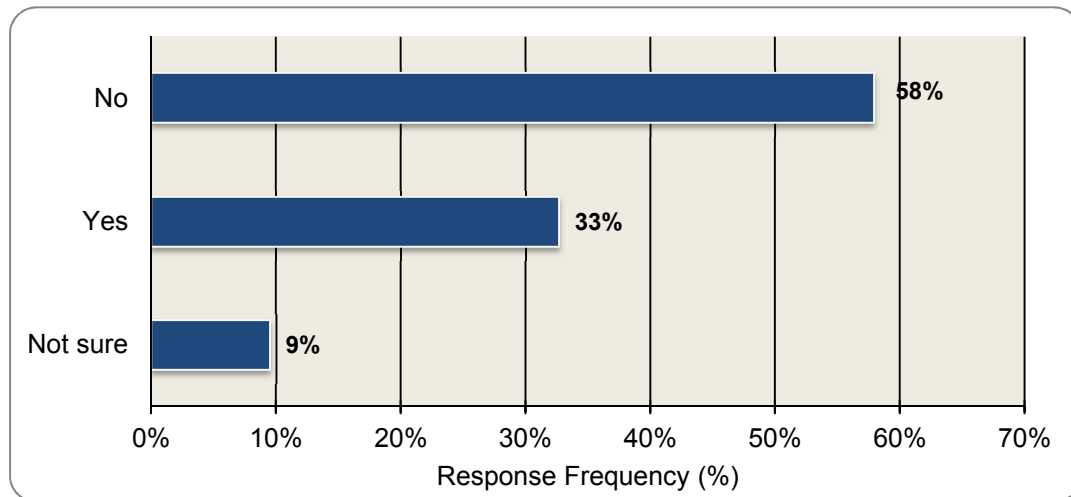
Note: Based on responses to the question "How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?" There were 249 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who were rural land managers.

**Figure 4.4: What has made you feel this way?**



### 4.3 Regulation of native vegetation

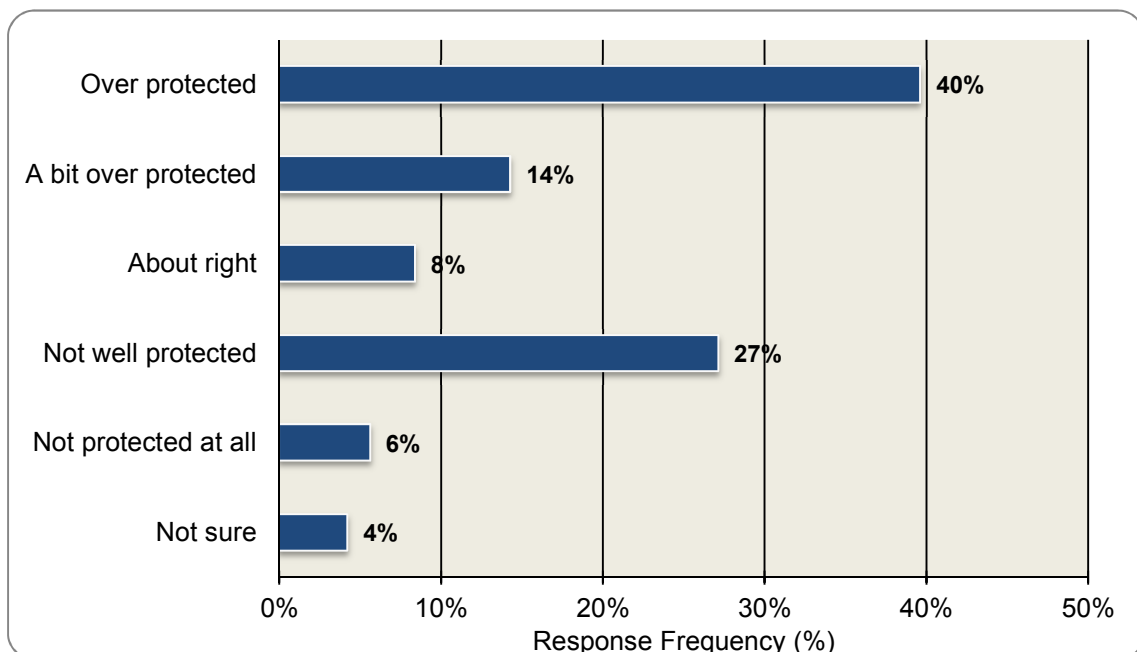
When asked about the regulation of native vegetation, the majority of rural land managers (58%) said they did not think the rules allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation so that normal agricultural activities could be undertaken (Figure 4.5). One-third of rural land managers said the rules did allow for enough opportunity to manage native vegetation.



Note: Based on 285 respondents.

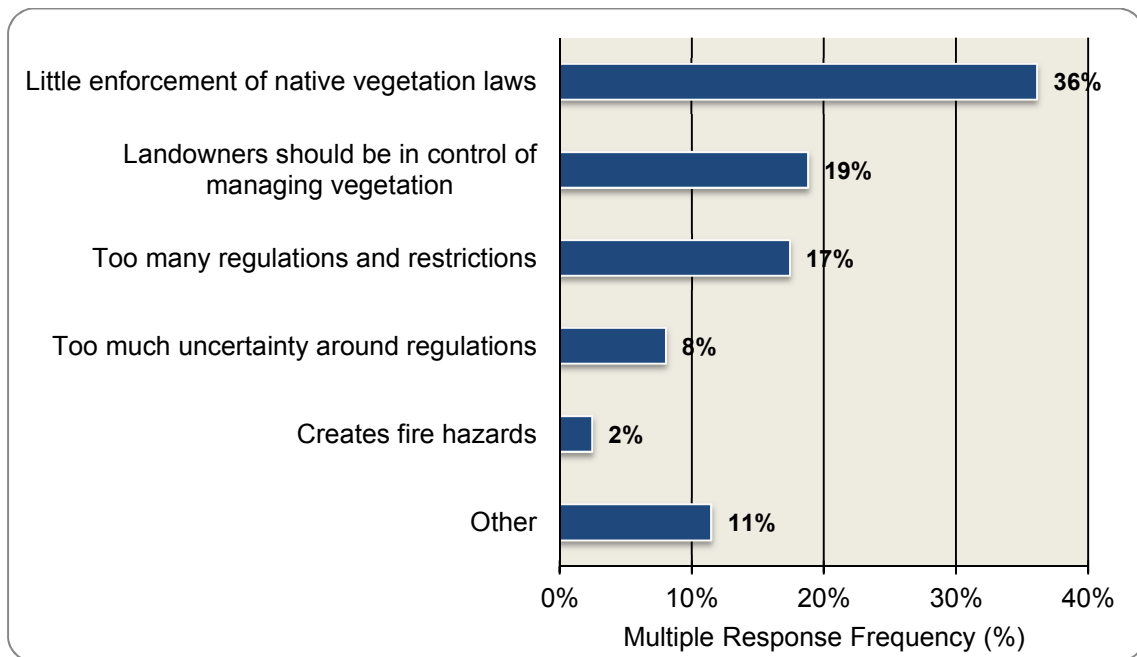
**Figure 4.5: Do you think the rules allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation, including clearing, so that normal agricultural activities can be undertaken?**

As shown in Figure 4.6, 54% of rural land managers felt that native vegetation was overprotected / a bit overprotected, whereas 33% of rural land managers felt it was not well protected / not protected at all. Figure 4.7 outlines respondents' reasons for their responses, which include little enforcement of native vegetation laws, the view that land managers should be in control of managing native vegetation and that there are too many regulations and restrictions.



Note: Based on 285 respondents.

**Figure 4.6: How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws?**

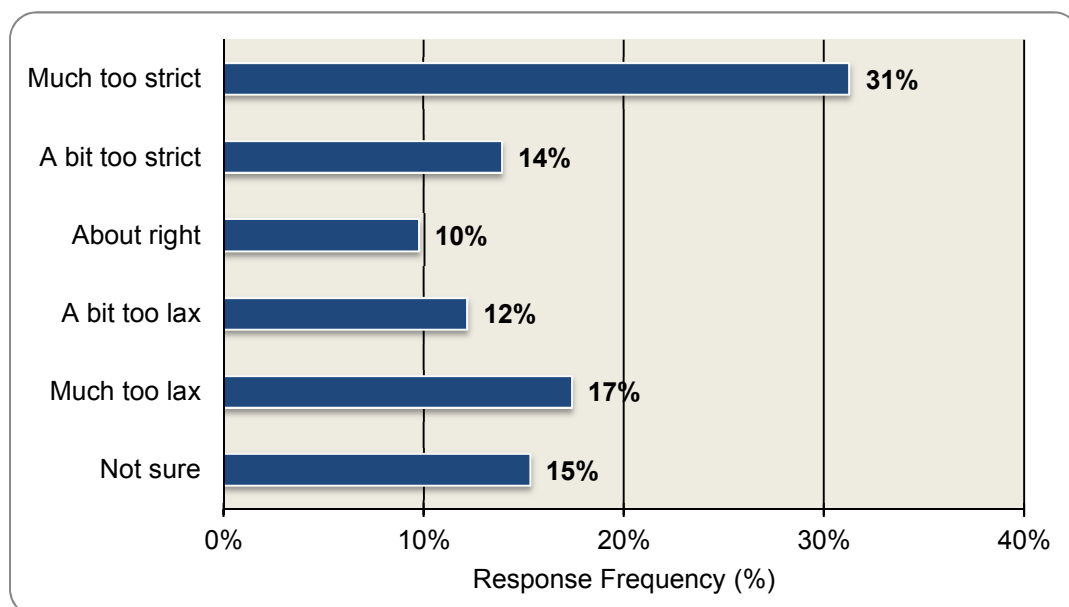


*Note: Based on responses to the question "How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws?" There were 256 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who were rural land managers.*

**Figure 4.7: What has made you feel this way?**

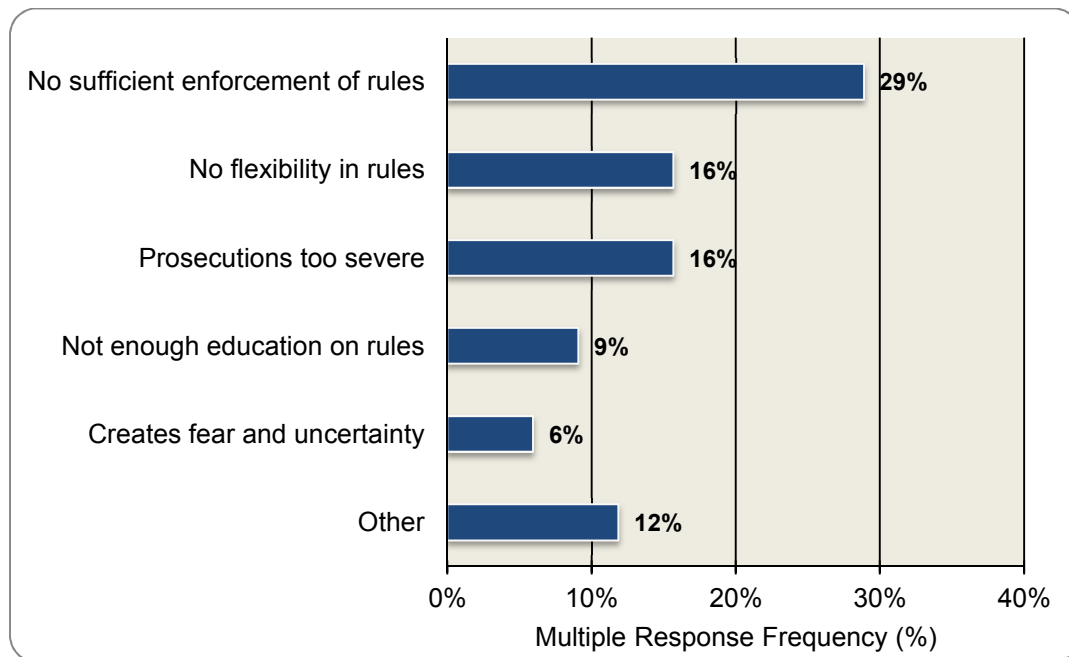
#### 4.3.1 Enforcement of native vegetation laws

Figure 4.8 describes the responses from rural land managers regarding enforcement of native vegetation laws. A total of 45% of rural land managers stated that enforcement of native vegetation laws were much too strict / a bit too strict, while 30% stated it was much too lax / a bit too lax. Figure 4.9 lists reasons provided by rural managers for their responses. These explanations include lack of sufficient enforcement of rules, no flexibility in rules and prosecutions being too severe.



*Note: Based on 287 respondents.*

**Figure 4.8: What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?**

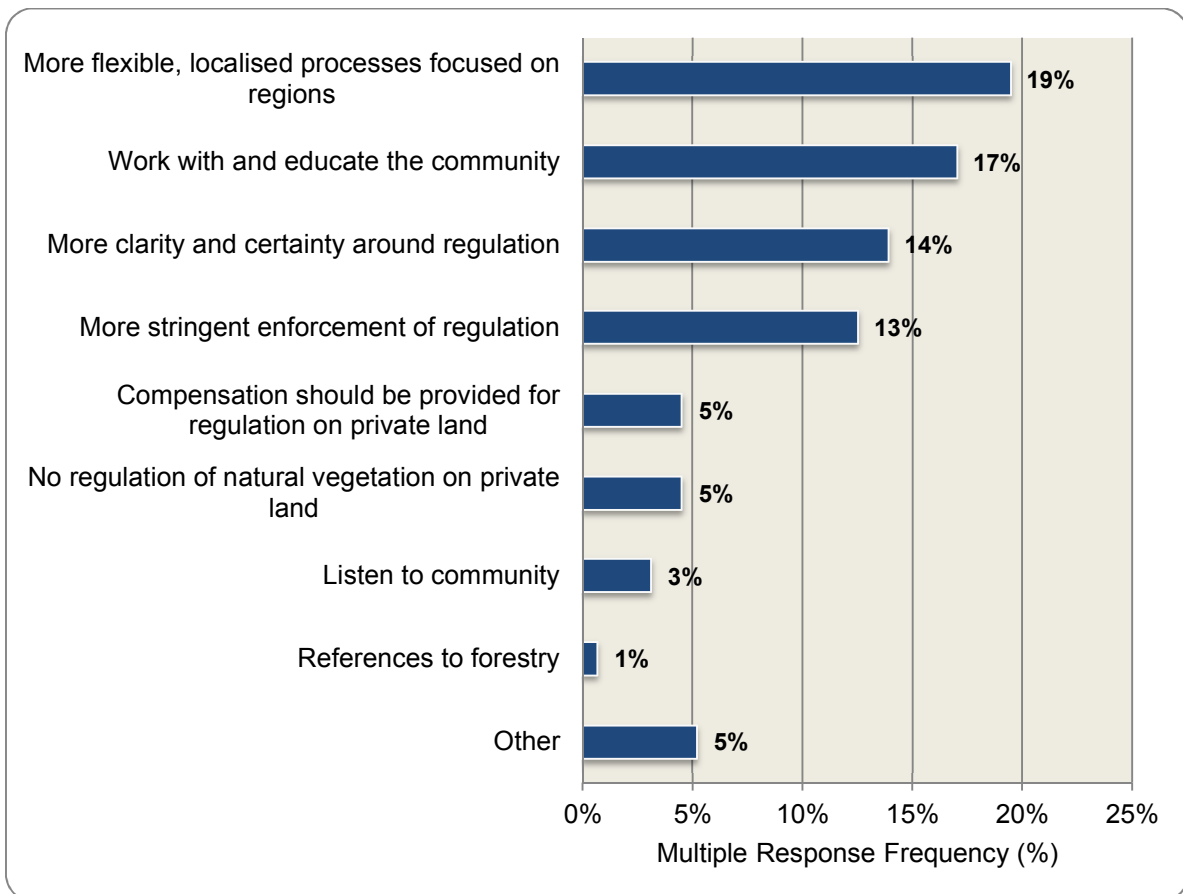


*Note: Based on responses to the question "What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?" There were 229 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who were rural land managers.*

**Figure 4.9: What has made you feel this way?**

#### **4.3.2 Rural land managers' suggestions for improvement to native vegetation laws**

Figure 4.10 shows suggestions provided by rural land managers to improve the regulation of native vegetation. The most common suggestions are more flexible and localised processes (focusing on regions), working with and educating the community, and more clarity and certainty.

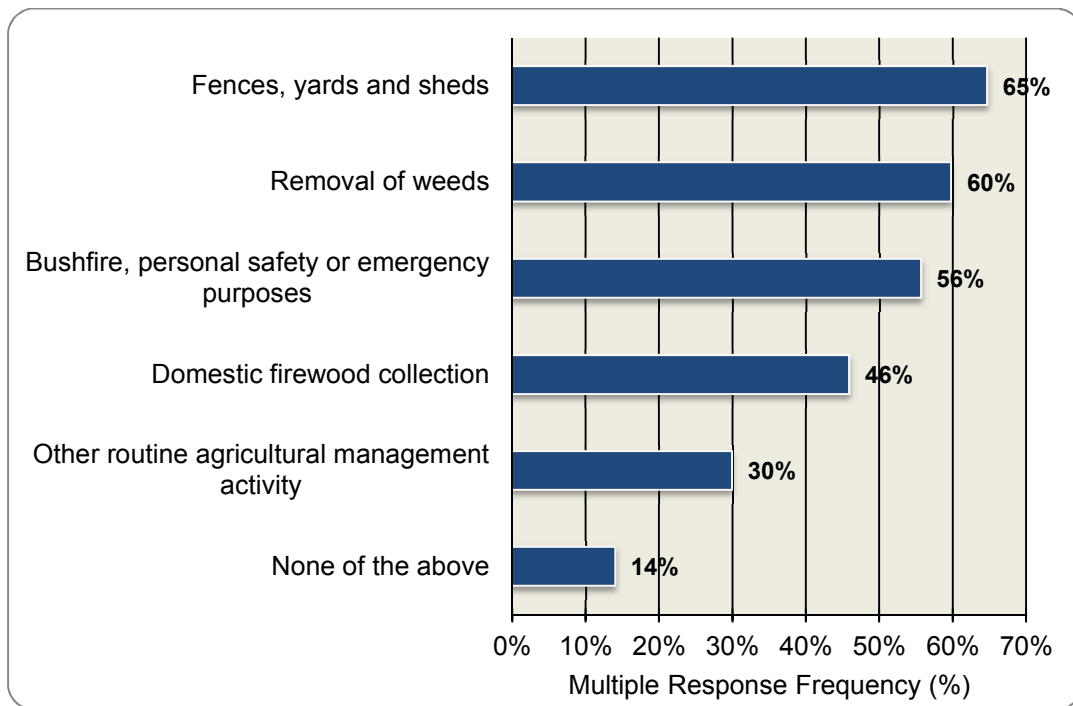


*Note: Based on 192 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who were rural land managers.*

**Figure 4.10: Please add any information that you feel would help us to improve the regulation of native vegetation.**

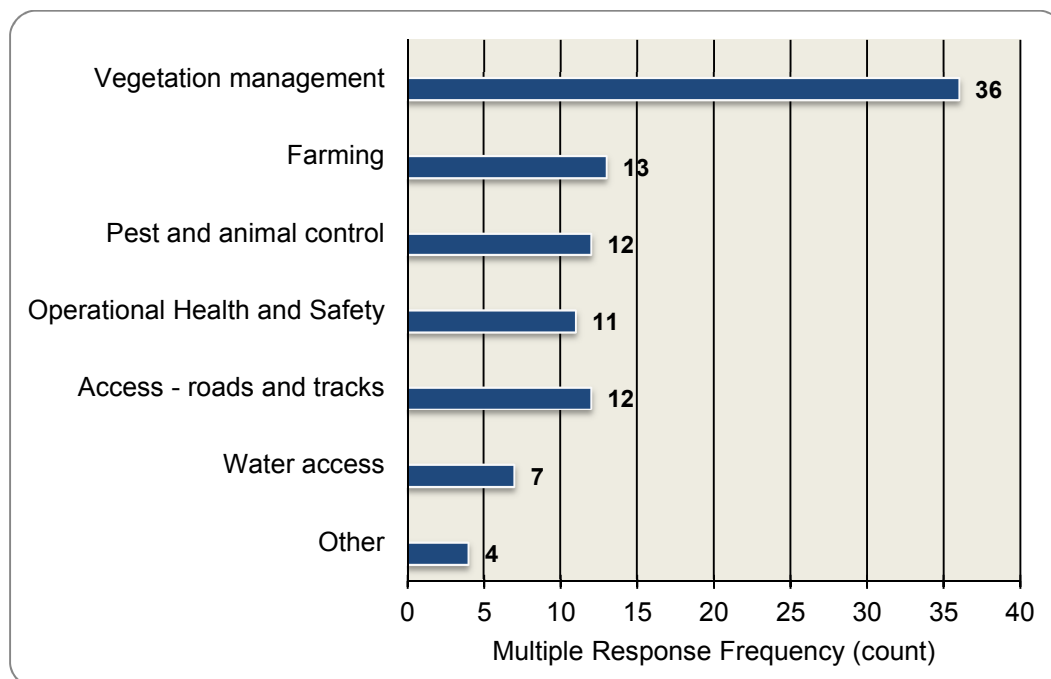
#### 4.4 Rural land managers' views regarding Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs)

Rural land managers were asked about their knowledge and perceptions related to clearing for Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs). RAMAs are clearing activities that do not require approval under the Native Vegetation Act. Figure 4.11 and Figure 4.12 show the various RAMAs that rural land managers stated they cleared for. If a land manager selected "other" they were asked to provide more information about the activity they had clear for, these results are shown in Figure 4.12. Generally, rural land managers were most often clearing for fences, yards and sheds (65%), removal of weeds (60%) and bushfire / safety (56%). Figure 4.13 displays the rural land managers' level of confidence in understanding what could be cleared. Two thirds (66%) of the rural land managers felt very confident or confident that they knew what clearing activities were allowed (see Figure 4.13).



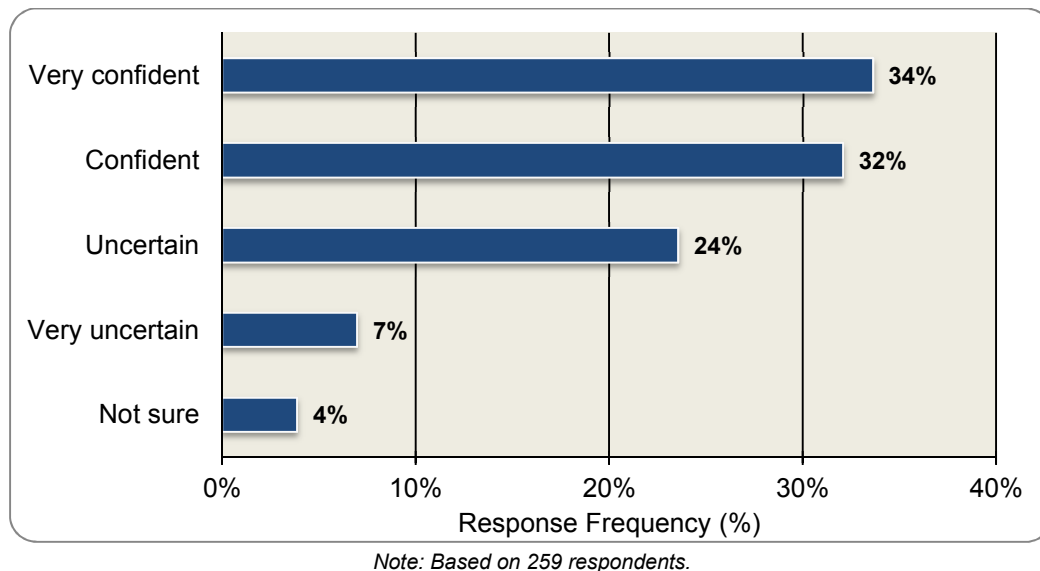
Note: Based on 286 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who were rural land managers.

**Figure 4.11: Have you cleared for any of the following routine agricultural management activities, also known as RAMAs?**



Note: Some of the activities listed in the chart above are not considered RAMAs. Frequency counts are based on the 71 respondents that answered "other" to the question "Have you cleared for any of the following routine agricultural management activities, also known as RAMAs?" Multiple responses were permitted.

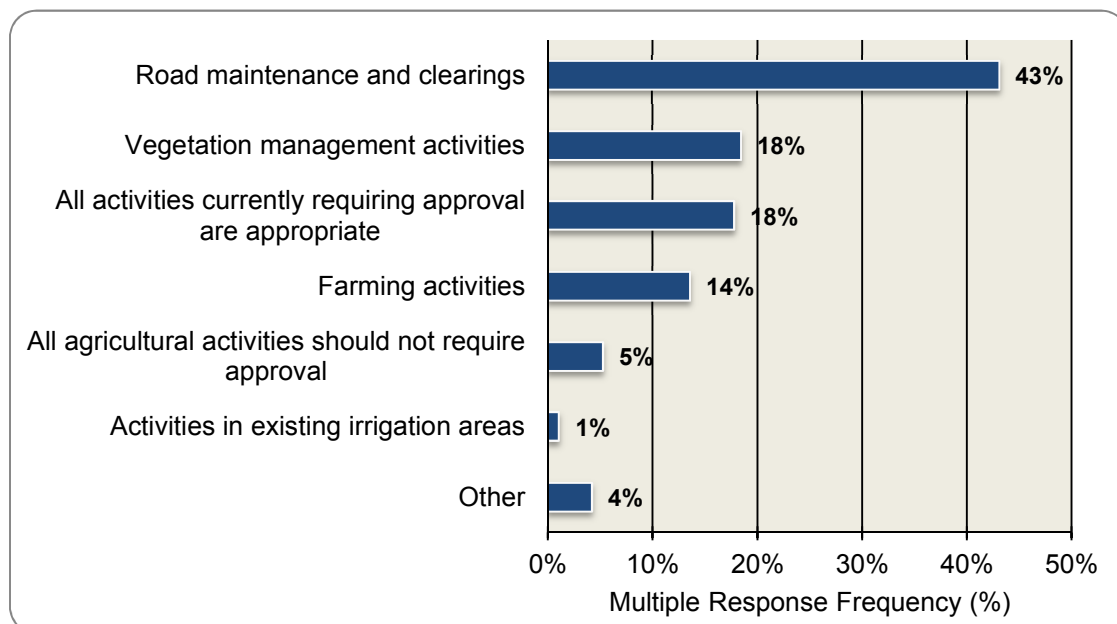
**Figure 4.12: Other routine agricultural management activity, please specify.**



**Figure 4.13: When you cleared for a routine agricultural management activity, how confident were you that you understood what clearing was allowed?**

Figure 4.14 shows activities that land managers have suggested should be considered to be RAMAs. Some other RAMAs suggested by rural land managers are already covered by existing RAMAs, this could show a misunderstanding of what is currently a RAMA or a misunderstanding of the question. The potential misunderstanding of what is currently a RAMA could be explained by the 31% of rural land managers who said they were either uncertain or very uncertain about what clearing was allowed (see Figure 4.13).

Activities that rural land managers suggested should be included in RAMAs were primarily road maintenance and clearings (43%), vegetation management (18%) and farming (14%). A total of 18% of land managers thought the current list of activities was appropriate (see Figure 4.14).



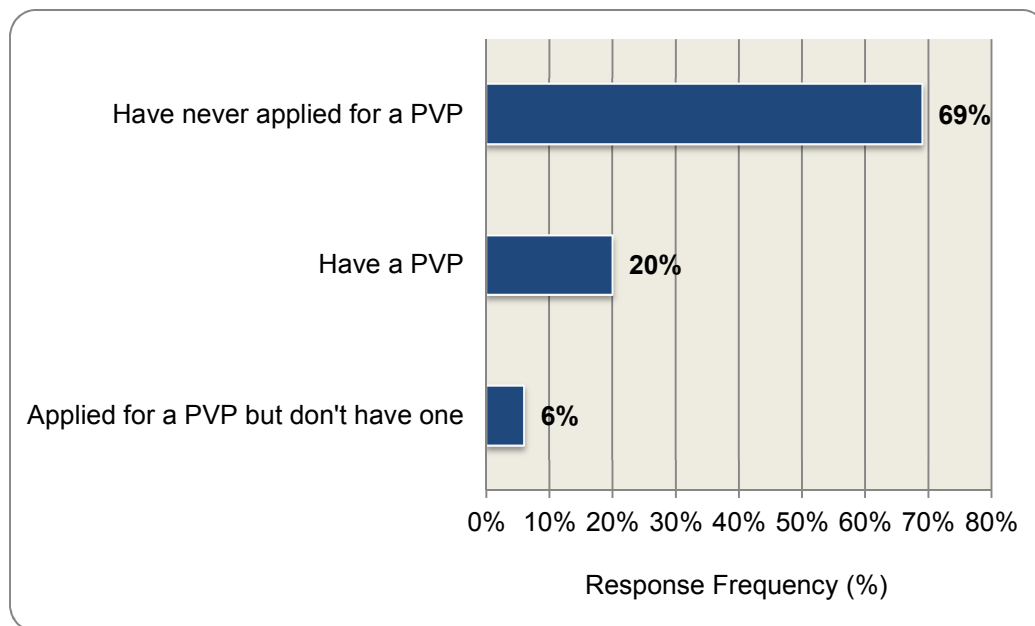
Note: Some of the suggestions provided by respondents are related to activities that are already considered RAMAs. Based on 249 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who were rural land managers.

**Figure 4.14: What agricultural activities that require clearing of native vegetation do you think should be considered as routine agricultural management activities (and therefore not require approval)?**

## 4.5 Rural land managers' views regarding Property Vegetation Plans (PVPs)

The following section outlines rural land managers' perceptions of Property Vegetation Plans (PVPs) and their satisfaction with the PVP process. PVPs are used to provide approval for clearing. PVPs are voluntary agreements negotiated between the landholder and the Catchment Management Authority. Only respondents who were rural land managers were asked to complete this section of the survey.

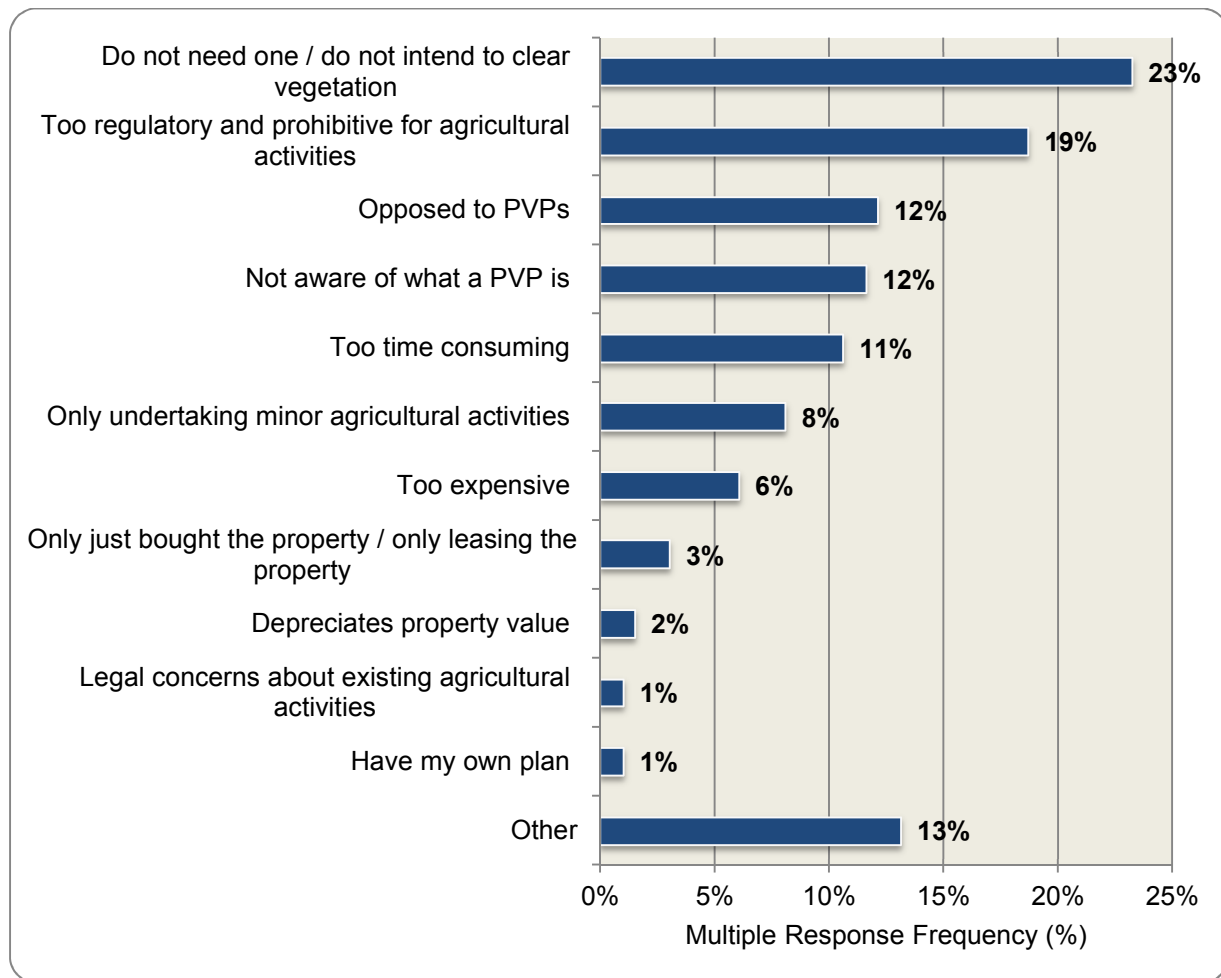
As shown in Figure 4.15, the majority of rural land managers (69%) had never applied for a PVP and a further 6% had applied for a PVP but did not currently have a PVP—suggesting that they are still in the process of applying for a PVP or the PVP was never finalised. A total of 20% of rural land managers had a PVP.



*Note: Based on 286 respondents. Five per cent of the total respondents did not answer this question.*

**Figure 4.15: Do you have a PVP for one or more of the properties you manage?**

Land managers who stated that did not have a PVP and had never applied for one were asked why they had never applied for a PVP. The responses are shown in Figure 4.16 The most common reasons were that they did not need one and were not intending to clear vegetation, PVPs were too regulatory and prohibitive, they were opposed to PVPs or were not aware of PVPs. Overall, there was a general lack of awareness and acceptance of PVPs by these rural land managers. Selected examples of comments are shown in Table 4-1.



Note: Based on 177 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who did not have a PVP and had never applied for a PVP.

**Figure 4.16: Why haven't you applied for a PVP?**

**Table 4-1: Why haven't you applied for a PVP?**

<b>Do not need one and do not intend to clear vegetation (23%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Not necessary to remove NV on my property."</li> <li>• "Exempt/not required - National Park."</li> <li>• "I do not intend to clear for cropping."</li> <li>• "Did not need one for what I wanted to do- clear my fences, tracks and weed management."</li> <li>• "No clearing proposed. Almost all vegetation has been added in past 25 years. Less than 20 trees existed on property in 1987."</li> <li>• "No intention to change the current situation other than to revegetate areas such as erosion site and to allow moderate levels of regeneration."</li> </ul>
<b>Too regulatory and prohibitive for agricultural activities (19%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Involves too much regulation for minor agricultural activities."</li> <li>• "Too bureaucratic - too hard - no regional assistance, except to take over."</li> <li>• "Because there is so much red tape and the results are negative."</li> <li>• "Because don't see any need to be tied to any more unnecessary government regulations. We need to keep our land use options open, not only for ourselves, but also for future generations."</li> <li>• "Not while the current regulations stand - need total flexibility. What's the best management and enterprise choice for the farm is continually changing so why have a plan that is set in place for decades?"</li> </ul>
<b>Opposed to PVPs (12%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I do not need to have a bureaucracy to tell me how to manage my farm."</li> <li>• "Do not accept the legalisation to be fair. View the concept to be theft of my land and will wait for compensation that is paid for the carbon that I am force to lock up on my land."</li> </ul>

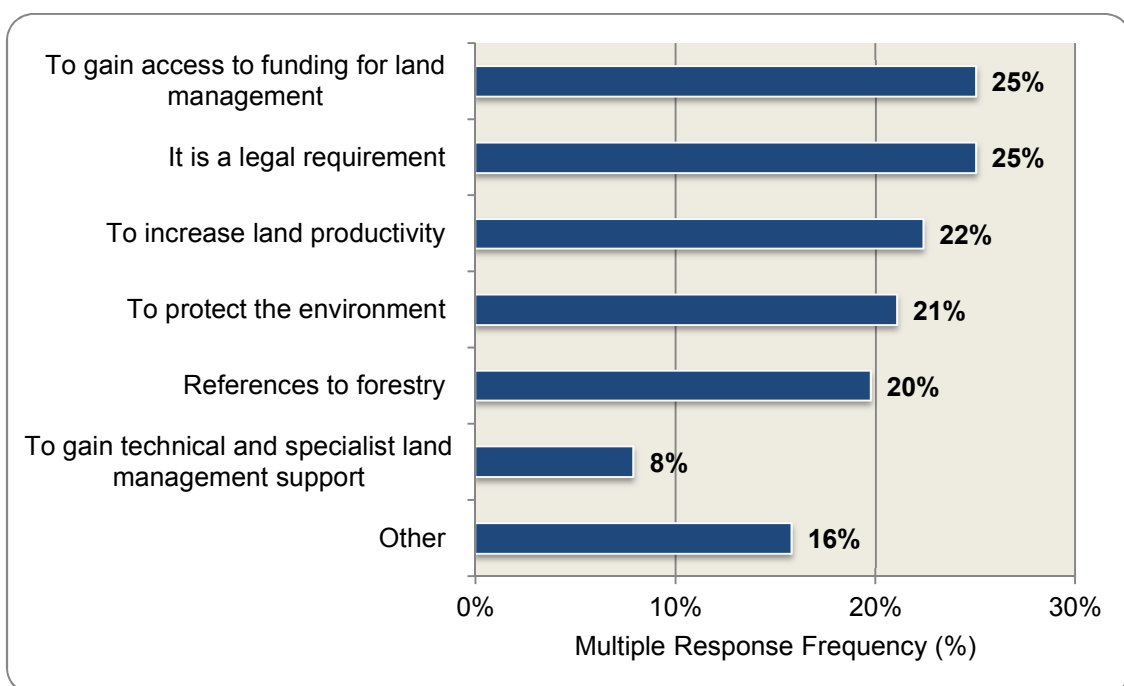


- “I don't see the need for bureaucrats telling me what I can do on my property when my policy is to leave my land in a better condition than when I inherited the property from my father who for over 50 years planted native trees on his land and controlled land degradation. This policy has continued with over 100 native tree species planted annually.”
- “Why should this be necessary when I own my property? The government does not own my property as I have not been paid any money from them. This is nothing short of blackmail to threaten people with massive penalties for not obeying the dictatorship.”

#### Other (13%)

- “CMA officers won't return my calls.”
- “I was told that because of the activity of other farmers in the region, I had no hope of approval.”
- “Trust my own judgement.”
- “I received development approval prior to the introduction of the NV Act.”

Those rural land managers who either had a PVP or had applied for one (26% of rural land managers) were asked to provide a reason why they had applied for a PVP. Most identified that it is a legal requirement, to gain access to funding for land management, to increase land productivity and protect the environment (see Figure 4.17). Selected examples of comments are shown in Table 4-2.



**Figure 4.17 Why did you apply for a PVP?**

*Note: Based on 74 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who either had a PVP or had applied for a PVP.*

**Table 4-2: Why did you apply for a PVP?**

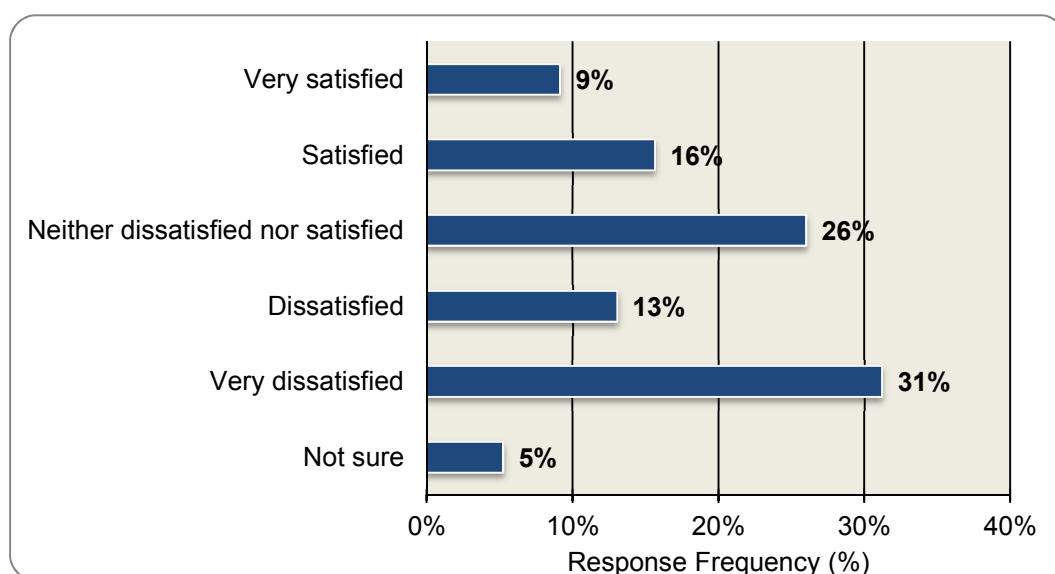
#### To gain access to funding for land management (25%)

- “To protect the native vegetation on our property and obtain assistance with weeding through funding.”
- “Just in order to get an incentive grant through the CMA.”
- “To obtain funding to assist Property management.”
- “Accessed “Caring for Country, Box Gum Woodland” environmental stewardship payments.”
- “To gain some support for our weed eradication efforts, in the form of encouragement, technical advice and finance.”

It is a legal requirement (25%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Satisfy the law.”</li> <li>• “WE use the guidelines.”</li> <li>• “The plan only comes into effect if a development is commenced. As part of the development approval I was required to enter into a PVP.”</li> <li>• “The PVP is currently not in force. It comes into effect if a developer removes seven trees in an adjoining block. I was 'obliged' to sign up for the PVP or the development would not be allowed to proceed.”</li> <li>• “Wanted to harvest native vegetation and it is a requirement under the Act to apply for one!”</li> </ul>	
To increase land productivity (22%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “To harvest trees for income.”</li> <li>• “To remove trees for development of irrigation.”</li> <li>• “To clear land of intrusive native species for improved cropping production and superior farm management.”</li> <li>• “We have a large area of weeds where we haven’t previously farmed. We want to get rid of the woody weeds so we can run more sheep on that area.”</li> <li>• “To make the property more productive.”</li> <li>• “We were able to take our paddock numbers from 9 to 21 and install a farm water scheme.”</li> </ul>	
Other (16%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “To see whether the system was workable - once I saw the way in which my land was permanently damaged by the imposition of a PVP I was not prepared to go further.”</li> <li>• “Wanted to have a secure set of values to follow but the whole setup is just jobs for very slack government bodies. Very, very disappointing set up.”</li> <li>• “I have my own plan. Nobody can approve or not approve of my plan.”</li> </ul>	

#### 4.5.1 Satisfaction with PVP process

This section outlines satisfaction with the PVP process of rural land managers who either had a PVP or had applied for one, so those land managers who have had some interaction with the PVP process. As shown in Figure 4.18, 44% of these land managers were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the PVP process, compared to 25% who were satisfied / very satisfied. There was also 26% who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

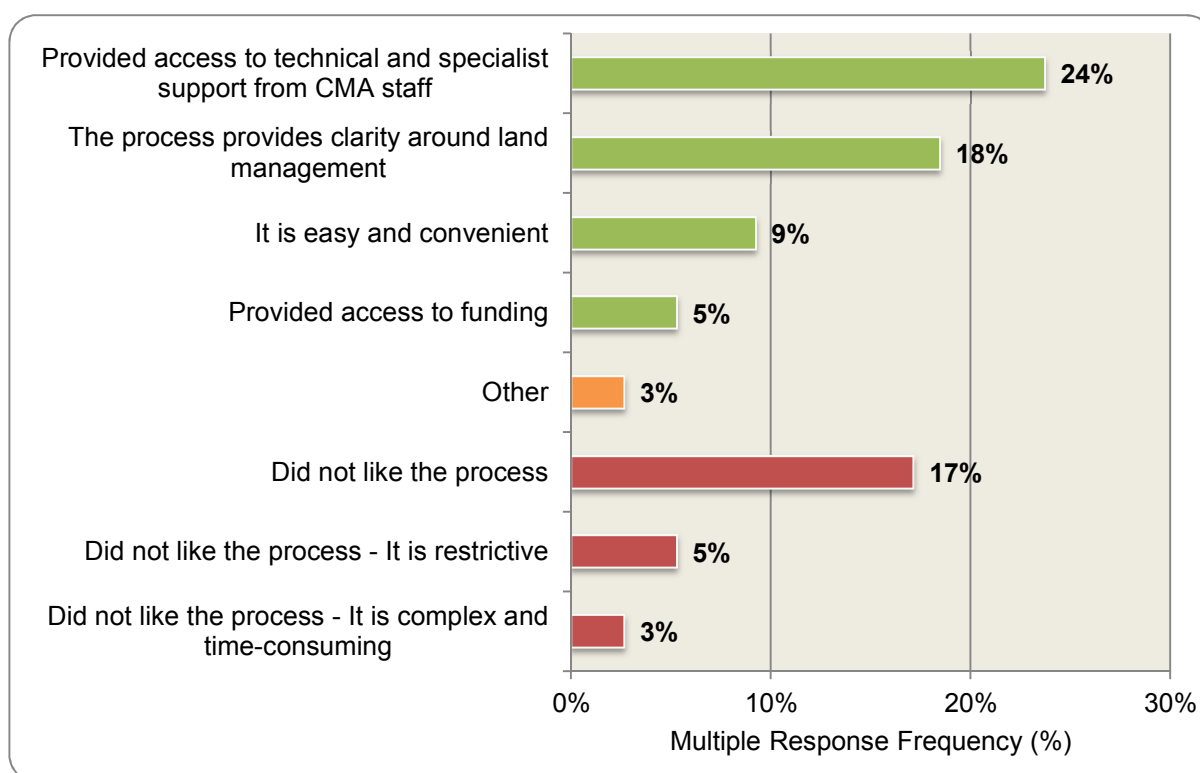


Note: Based on 77 respondents.

Figure 4.18: How satisfied are you with the PVP process?

Rural land managers who either had a PVP or had applied for one were asked to provide comments on what they liked about the PVP process. Reasons rural land managers gave for liking the process were that it provided: access to technical support and staff (24%); clarity around land management (18%); and access to funding (5%) (see Figure 4.19). Twenty five per cent of those who responded to this question actually provided comment about what they did not like about the PVP process. This included a general dislike of the process (17%), a feeling that the process is restrictive (5%) and that it is complex and time consuming (3%).

Fifty-seven per cent of these rural land managers liked the PVP process, while 25% did not like the process. The remaining 3% of these rural land managers whose comments were categorised as “other” included both respondents who liked and did not like the PVP process. Table 4-3 shows selected comments from rural land managers regarding what they liked about the PVP process.



*Note: Based on 57 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who either had a PVP or had applied for a PVP.*

**Figure 4.19: What did you like about the PVP process?**

**Table 4-3: What did you like about the PVP process?**

Provided access to technical and specialist support from CMA staff (24%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The professionalism of the CMA staff that carried to the assessment otherwise it was a unreasonable impost of time.”</li> <li>• “Input from local CMAs.”</li> <li>• “Good access to local staff.”</li> <li>• “The staff that are in place to assist with the filling out of paper work.”</li> <li>• “It was very simple and the officer in charge was very helpful.”</li> </ul>	
The process provides clarity around land management (18%)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “My property was mapped according to soil and veg type so I could identify areas that needed attention easily.”</li> <li>• “It is useful to have a property management plan, and to carefully think about the future use and management of the property.”</li> </ul>	

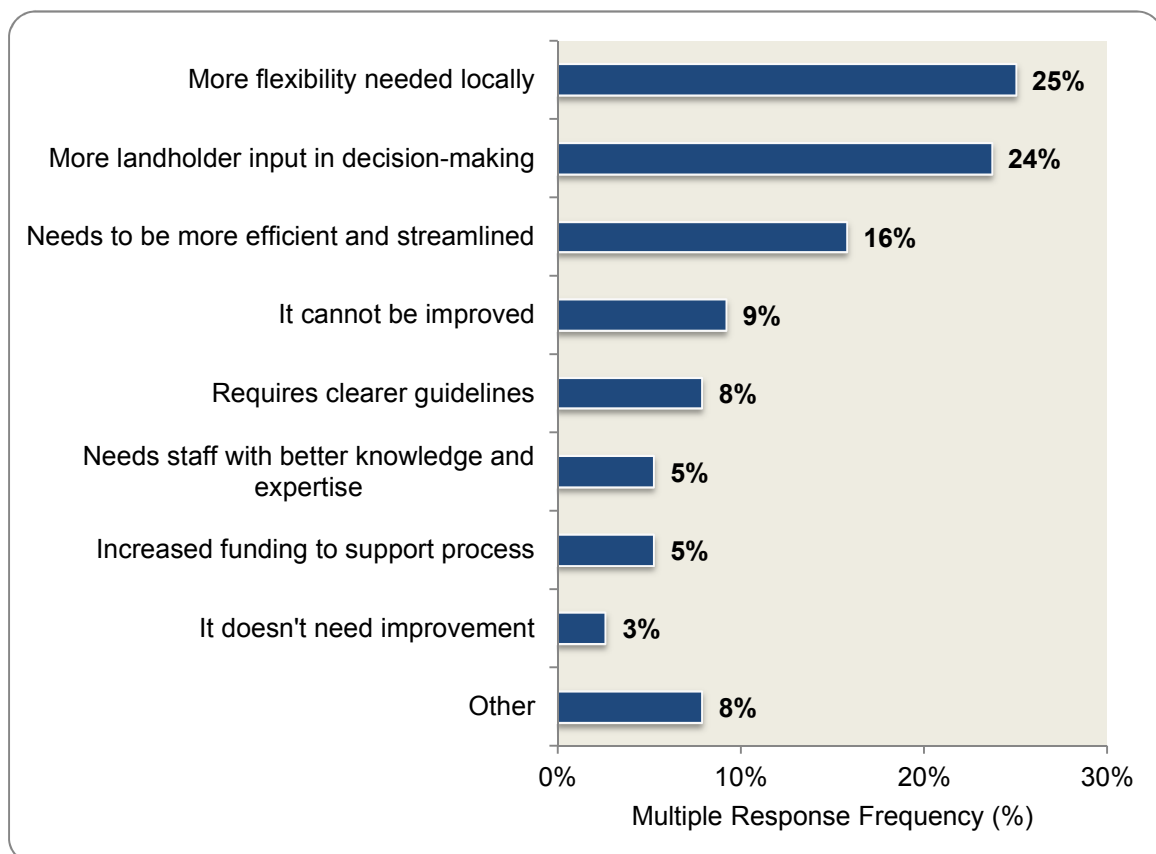
- “Provision of necessary maps / information. Ability to question initial assessments, and a reassessment process.”
- “Clarity in understanding ‘the rules’ in terms of native vegetation.”
- “Allowed me to make a start on an unviable property without looking over my shoulder.”

#### Did not like the process (17%)

- “Not one thing”
- “Absolutely nothing”

### 4.5.2 Suggestions for improvement to PVPs

Figure 4.20 and Table 4.4 outline the suggestions provided by rural land managers who either have a PVP or have applied for one on how the PVP process could be improved. Twenty-five per cent suggested more flexibility locally. Additionally, 24% said the process needed more landholder input in decision-making and 16% said the process needed to be more efficient and streamlined. Other suggestions noted that PVPs do not consider individual property requirements, and that the process does not take into account the opinions of the landholder (see Table 4.4).



Note: Based on 63 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who either had a PVP or had applied for a PVP.

**Figure 4.20: How do you think the PVP process can be improved?**

**Table 4-4: How do you think the PVP process can be improved?**

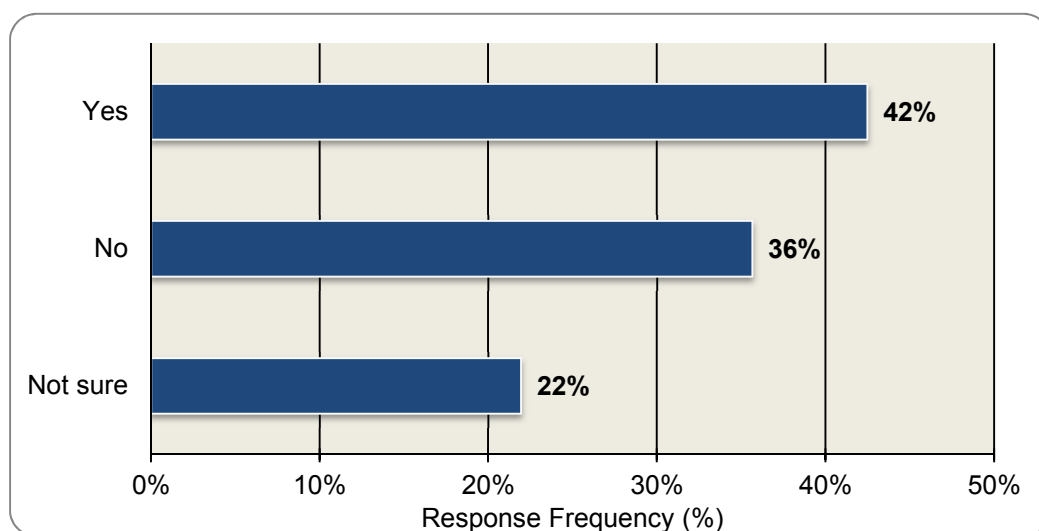
#### More flexibility needed locally (25%)

- “PVPs in my experience are a standard formula, and not site specific enough. There was not enough opportunity to reach common agreement. It would be better if there was more flexibility.”
- “Incorporate land and climate functions.”
- “Give consideration to individual property requirements. Still maintain set aside areas but allow greater freedom for the landholder to clear species that may not necessarily be listed under INS. The process of obtaining a PVP is too slow and needs to be speeded up so that landholders can plan better.”

<b>Needs more landholder input in decision-making (24%)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Better communication with government and an attitude that we are involved in a partnership rather than a process that pits landholders against government officials.”</li> <li>• “Taking note of what property owners want to do with their land and not having scientists dictate what can be done and how it can be done as these people all have hidden agendas and very limited experience on land management.”</li> <li>• “There is a need to take in the ideas of landowners more in setting up a PVP who have the long term values at hand.”</li> </ul>	
<b>Needs to be more efficient and streamlined (16%)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It seems that it has become more complicated and bureaucratic in recent years, although that's only based on what I've heard. I think it should be kept simple so that people feel it is something they can do, rather than something that is very complicated and time-consuming.”</li> <li>• “Streamline the process, make it quicker with more flexibility for assessors to take into account improve or maintain over the whole area not just a snapshot of the assessment area.”</li> <li>• “Increased support during the process i.e. contact during the time frame. Timely review on completion.”</li> </ul>	
<b>Other (8%)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I would love to have a digital mapping set up for my property - PVP etc. all in a system. On ground inspections / extension prior to official start of the process.”</li> <li>• “It should be a property plan, not a property vegetation plan. There is a role for all plants and processes and these involve the development of micro-climates, the use of the short water cycle and landscape cooling. An overall scoping process should be involved that concentrates on agricultural productivity linked with ecosystem services for which farmers should be paid - not penalised.”</li> </ul>	

#### 4.5.3 Recommendation of PVP

Figure 4.21 shows the likelihood that rural land managers who have a PVP or have applied for one would recommend applying for a PVP to other land managers. As can be seen, 42% stated they would recommend applying for a PVP, 35% said they would not, and a further 22% were unsure.



Note: Based on 73 respondents.

**Figure 4.21: Would you recommend seeking approval for a PVP to other landholders?**

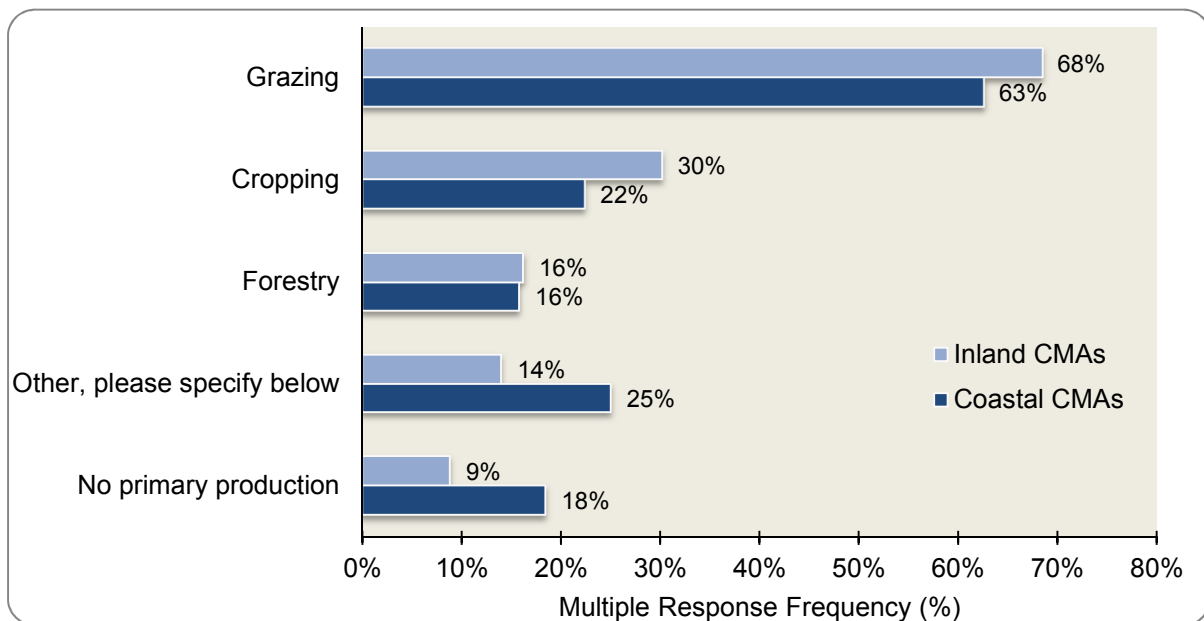
## 4.6 Comparative Assessment of Coastal and Inland Rural Land Manager Responses

Using the postcodes provided by rural land managers, the survey sample was further divided between inland and coastal CMA areas, as shown in Table 4-5.

**Table 4-5: Categorisation of CMAs into coastal and inland regions**

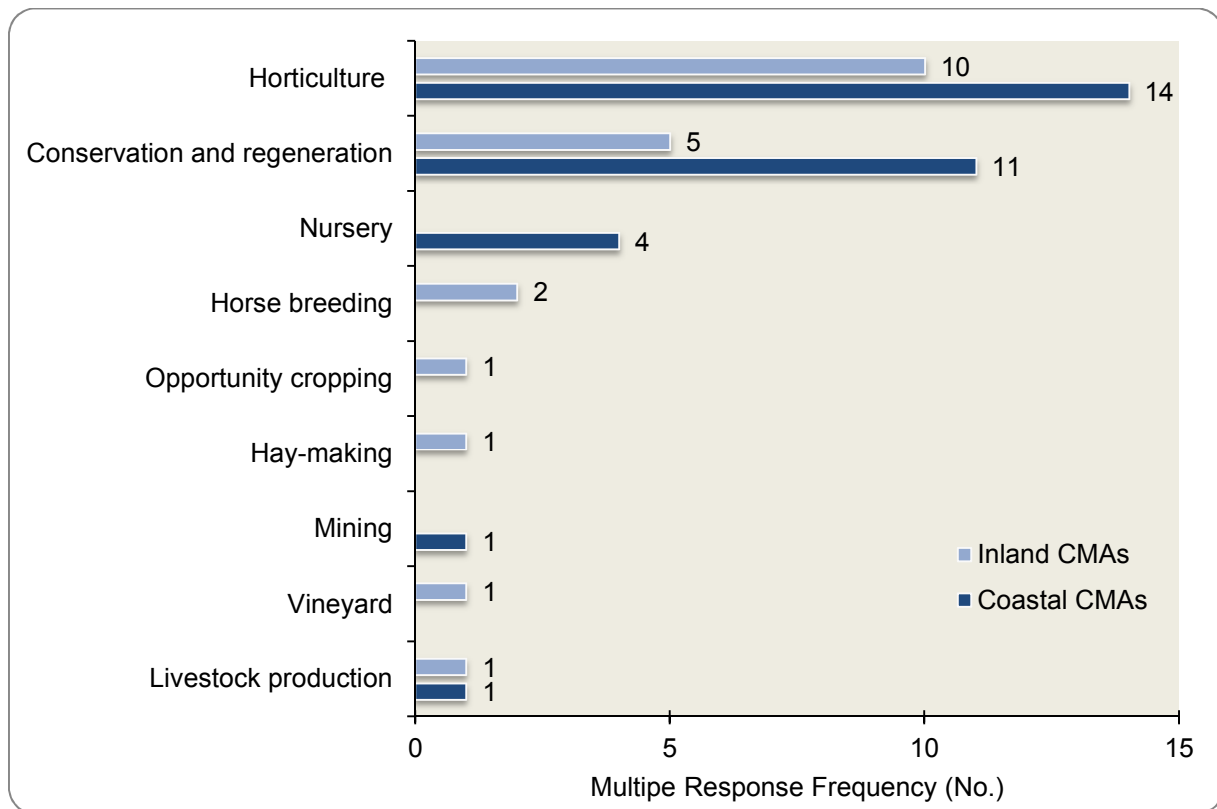
Area	CMA	Number of respondents
<b>Coastal</b>	Hawkesbury Nepean CMA	28
	Hunter-Central Rivers CMA	21
	Northern Rivers CMA	76
	Southern Rivers CMA	27
	<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>Inland</b>	Border Rivers - Gwydir CMA	14
	Central West CMA	32
	Lachlan CMA	21
	Lower Murray Darling CMA	12
	Murray CMA	9
	Murrumbidgee CMA	10
	Namoi CMA	21
	Western CMA	17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>

Rural land managers in coastal CMA areas were more likely to be undertaking horticultural and regeneration / conservation activities or have no primary production than their inland counterparts. While inland rural land managers were more likely to be undertaking grazing and cropping activities (see Figure 4.22 and Figure 4.23).



*Note: Based on 279 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for inland CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in inland CMAs. Percentages for coastal CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in coastal CMAs.*

**Figure 4.22: What form of primary production, if any, do you have on the main property you manage?**

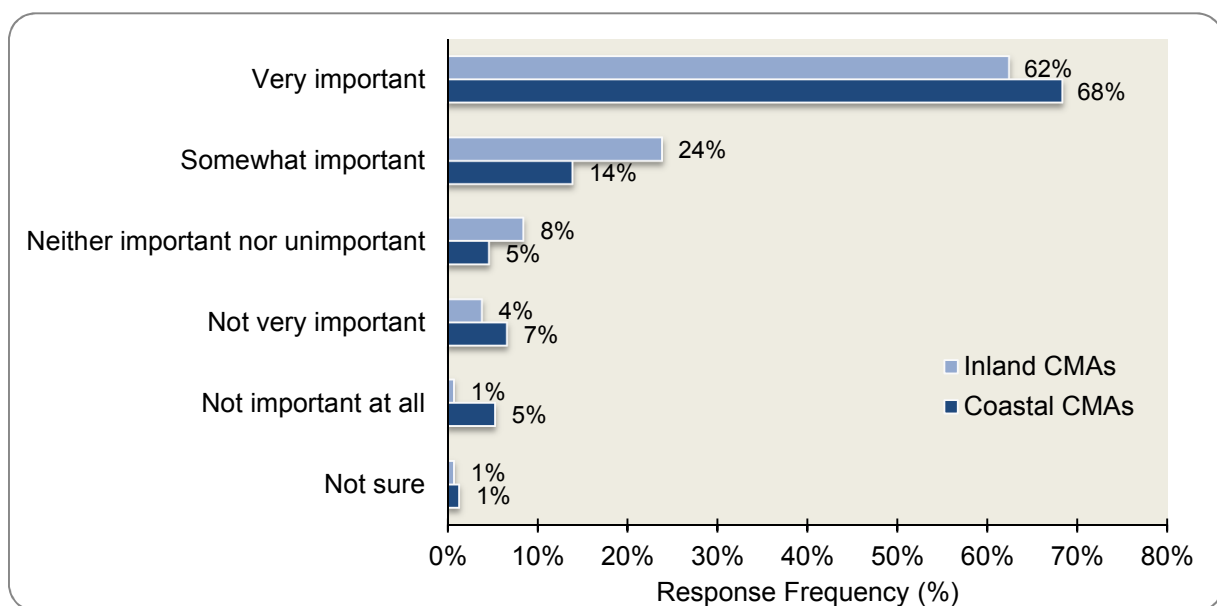


Note: Frequency counts are based on the 52 respondents that answered "other" to the question "What form of primary production, if any, do you have on the main property you manage?" Multiple responses were permitted.

**Figure 4.23: Other, please specify.**

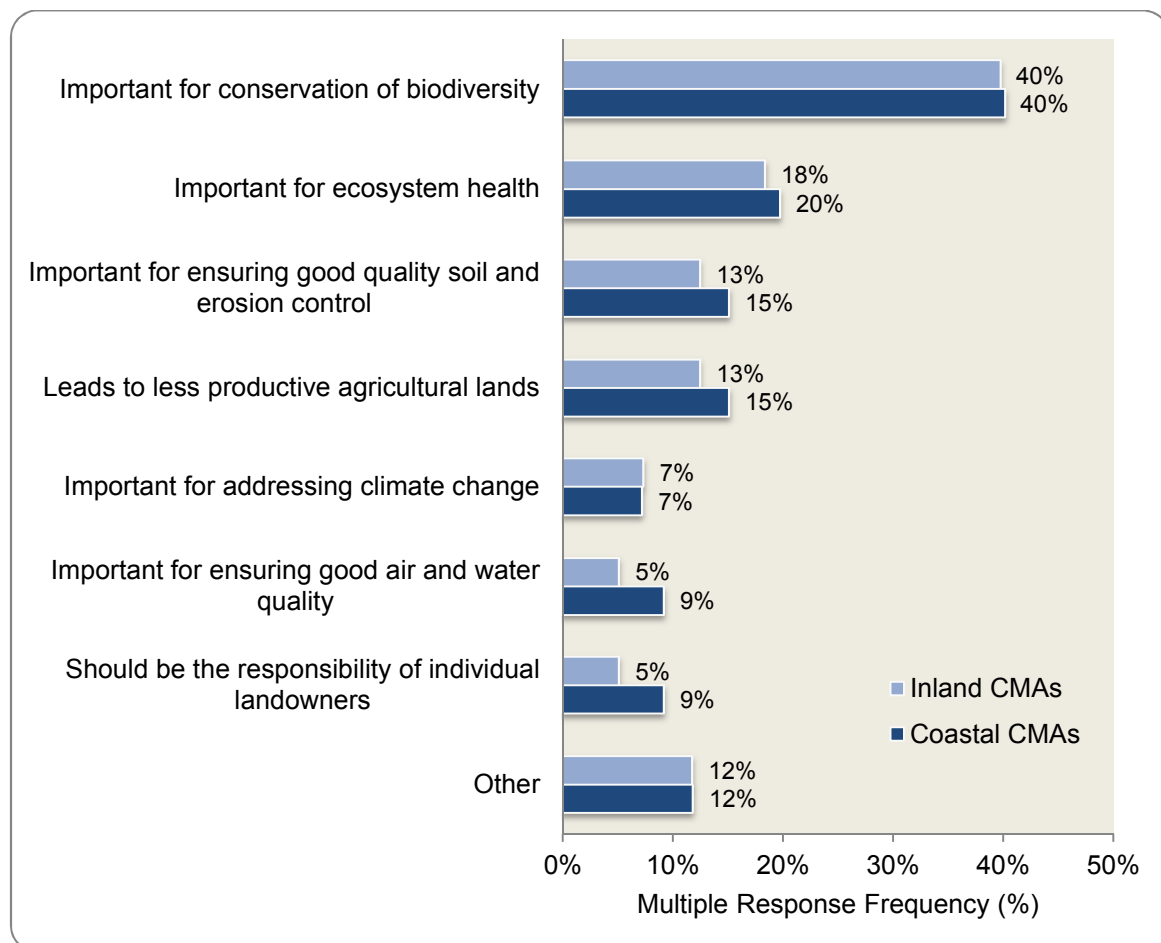
#### 4.6.1 Importance of native vegetation

Figure 4.24 displays a comparison of opinions from rural landholders in inland and coastal CMA areas on the importance of native vegetation to viable agriculture. There are no significant differences in view on the importance of native vegetation between these CMA areas, nor on the reasons given for their response (see Figure 4.25).



Note: Based on 286 respondents.

**Figure 4.24: How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?**



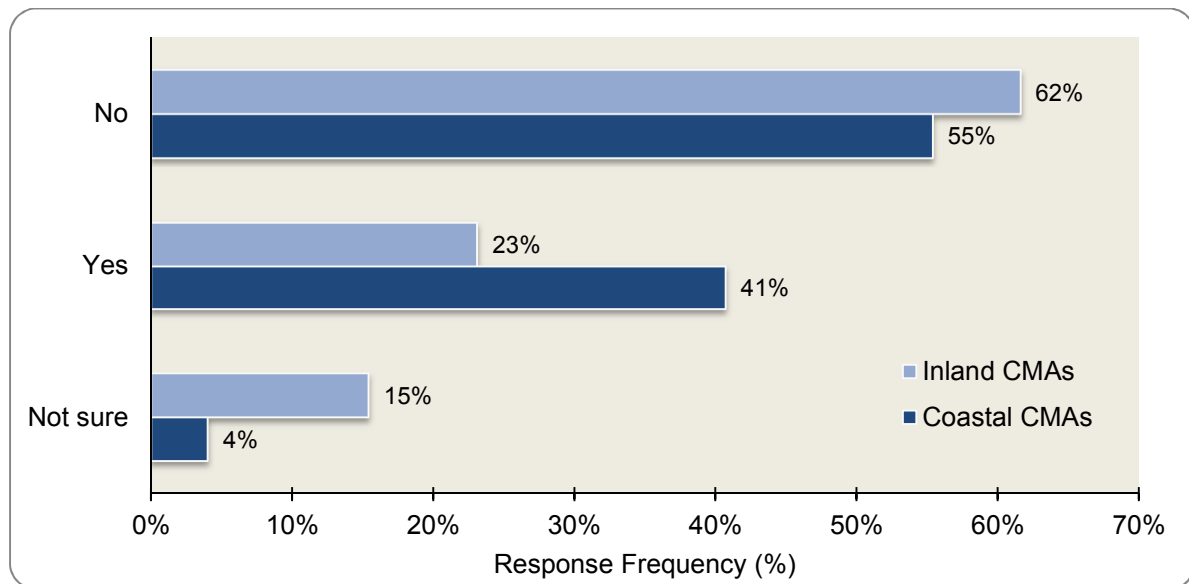
*Note: Based on responses to the question "How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?" There were 249 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for inland CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in inland CMAs. Percentages for coastal CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in coastal CMAs.*

**Figure 4.25: What has made you feel this way?**

#### 4.6.2 Regulation of native vegetation

Figure 4.26 describes responses from rural land managers from inland and coastal CMA areas regarding whether native vegetation rules allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation so that normal agricultural activities can be undertaken. Respondents from coastal CMA areas stated that the rules allowed enough opportunity to manage native vegetation, more than respondents from inland CMA areas (41% and 23% respectively). However, there was a similar proportion of rural land managers from inland and coastal CMA areas who stated that the rules did not allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation (see Figure 4.27), leaving more inland land managers stating they were unsure about the rules.

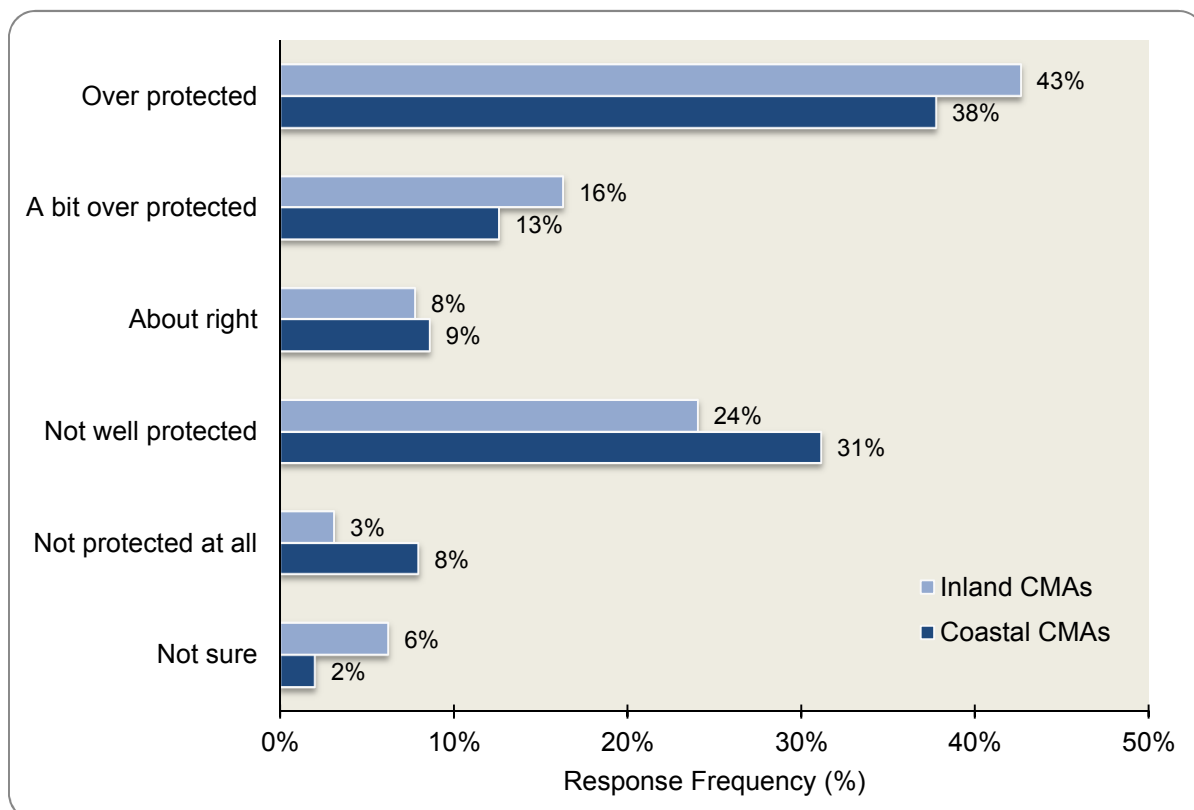




Note: Based on 285 respondents.

**Figure 4.26: Do you think the rules allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation, including clearing, so that normal agricultural activities can be undertaken?**

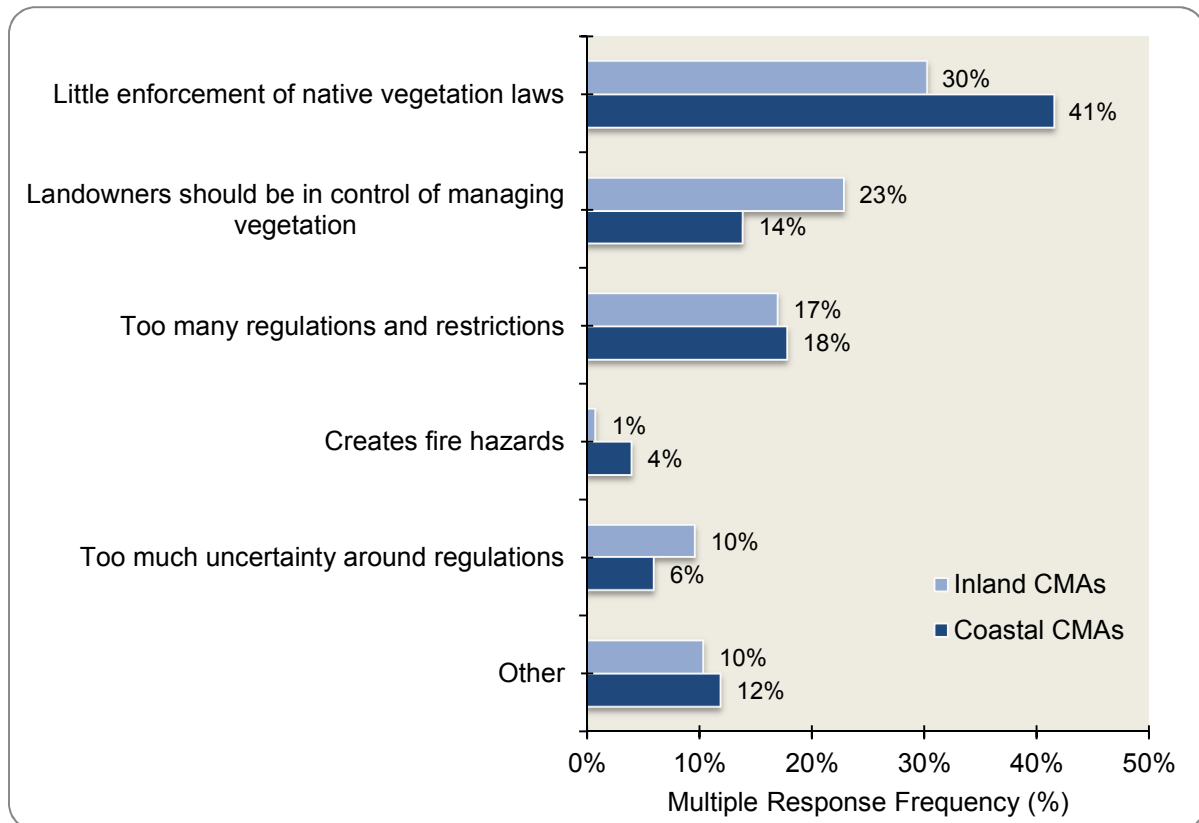
Figure 4.27 compares responses regarding the protection of native vegetation under current native vegetation laws. The results show that inland rural land managers are slightly more likely to consider native vegetation to be overprotected / a bit overprotected (59%), compared with coastal land managers (51%).



Note: Based on 285 respondents.

**Figure 4.27: How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws?**

Figure 4.28 shows that coastal rural land managers are more likely to think there is insufficient enforcement of native vegetation laws than inland land managers (41% and 31% respectively). Inland rural land managers on the other hand are more likely to think landholders should be in control of managing vegetation. Interestingly, a fairly equal proportion of coastal and inland rural land managers think there are too many regulations and restrictions (17% and 18% respectively).

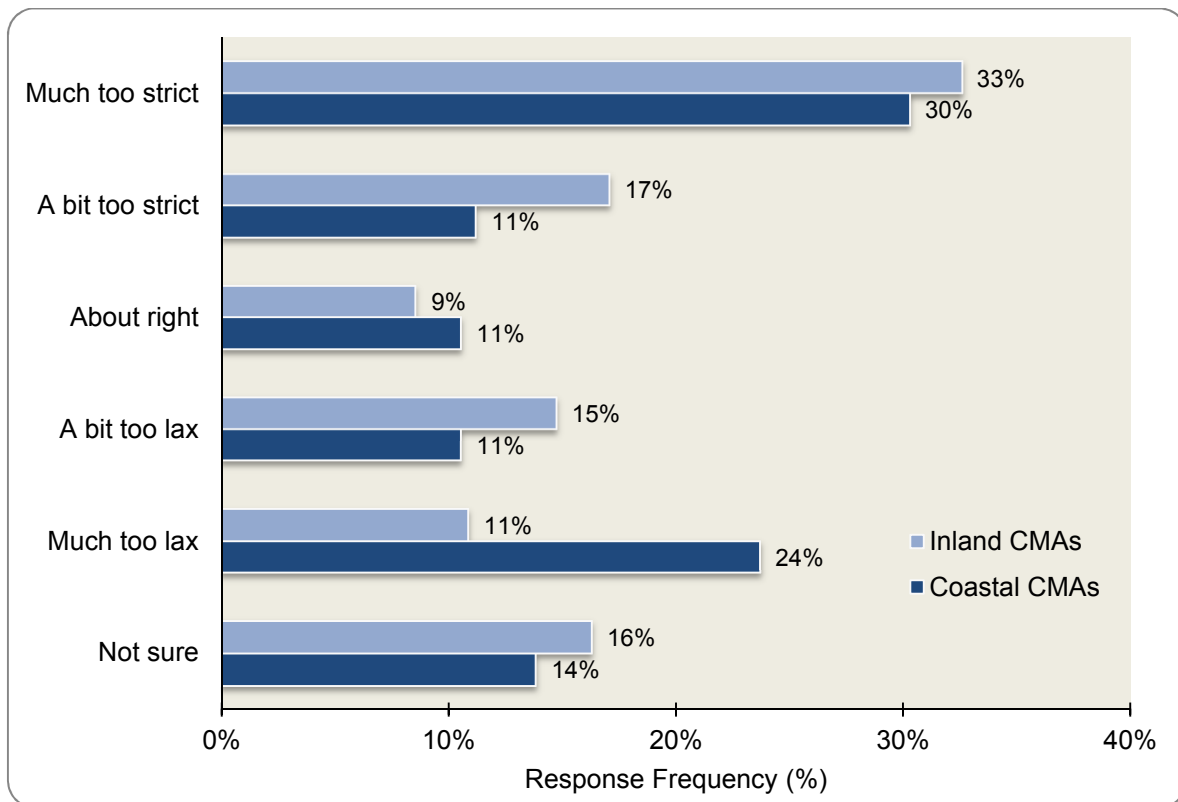


*Note: Based on responses to the question "How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws?" There were 256 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for inland CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in inland CMAs. Percentages for coastal CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in coastal CMAs.*

**Figure 4.28: What has made you feel this way?**

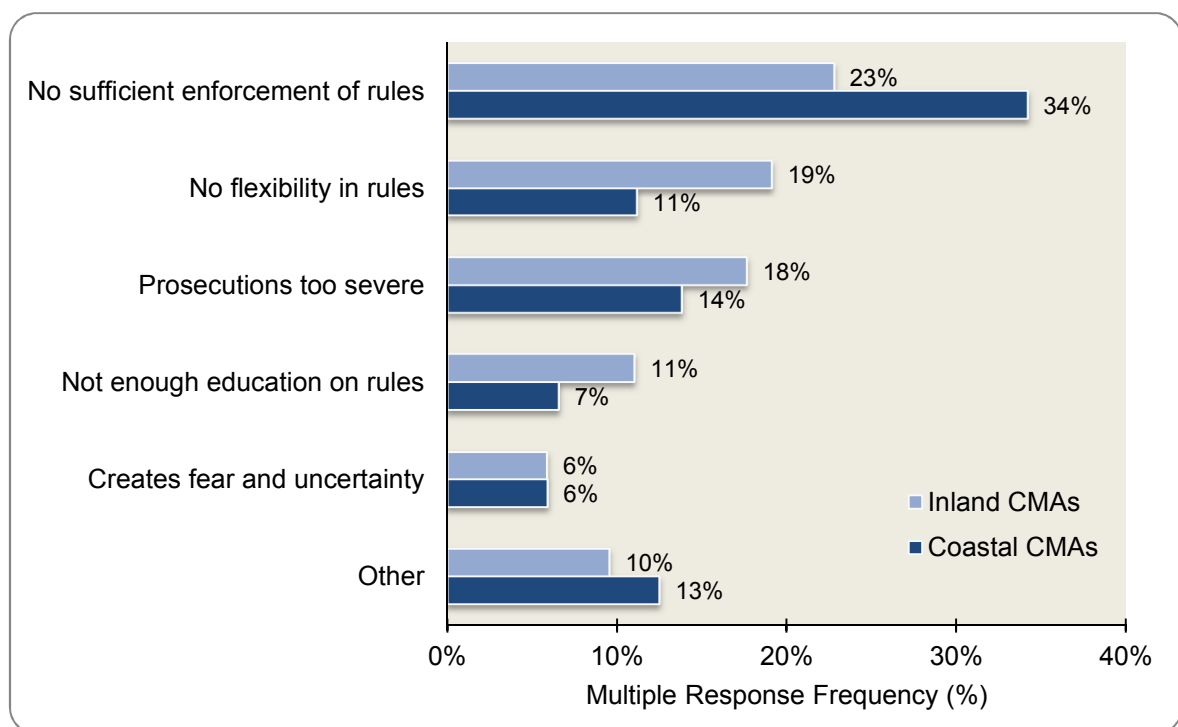
#### 4.6.2.1 Enforcement of native vegetation laws

Figure 4.29 and Figure 4.30 compare responses from rural land managers from inland and coastal CMA areas regarding enforcement of native vegetation laws. Rural land managers from inland CMA areas were more likely than those from coastal CMA areas to view enforcement as too strict (50% and 41% respectively) - citing reasons that there was not enough flexibility in the rules, that prosecutions were too severe, and that there was not enough education on the rules (see Figure 4.29). In contrast, 24% of respondents from coastal CMA areas stated the enforcement of rules were much too lax, as compared to 11% of respondents from inland CMA areas (see Figure 4.30).



Note: Based on 287 respondents.

**Figure 4.29: What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?**

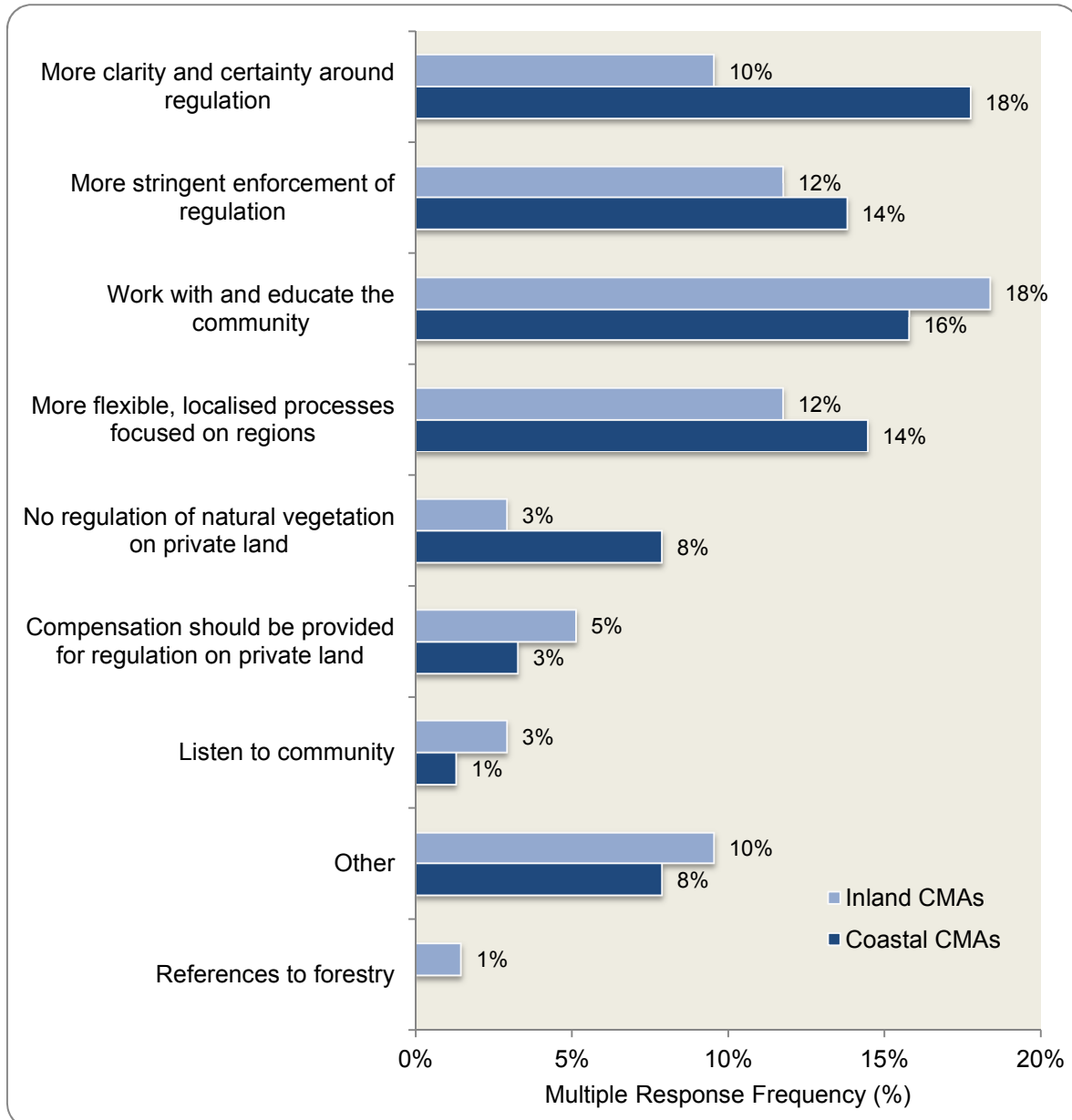


Note: Based on responses to the question "What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?" There were 229 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for inland CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in inland CMAs. Percentages for coastal CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in coastal CMAs.

**Figure 4.30: What has made you feel this way?**

#### 4.6.2.2 Rural land managers' suggestions for improvement to native vegetation laws

Figure 4.31 shows suggestions provided by rural land managers to help improve the regulation of native vegetation. The predominant suggestion from coastal rural land managers was to provide more clarity and certainty around legislation. While inland rural land managers were more likely to suggest working with and educating the community.

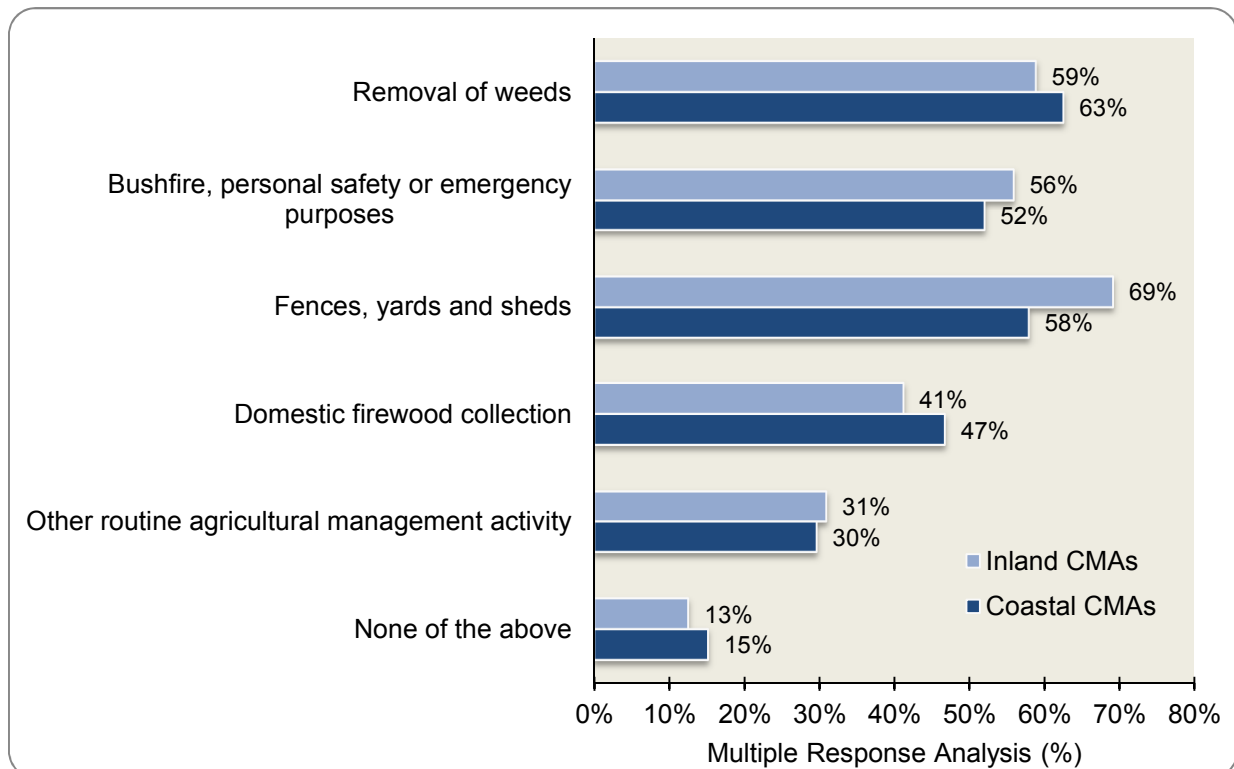


*Note: Based on 192 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for inland CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in inland CMAs. Percentages for coastal CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in coastal CMAs.*

**Figure 4.31: Please add any information that you feel would help us to improve the regulation of native vegetation.**

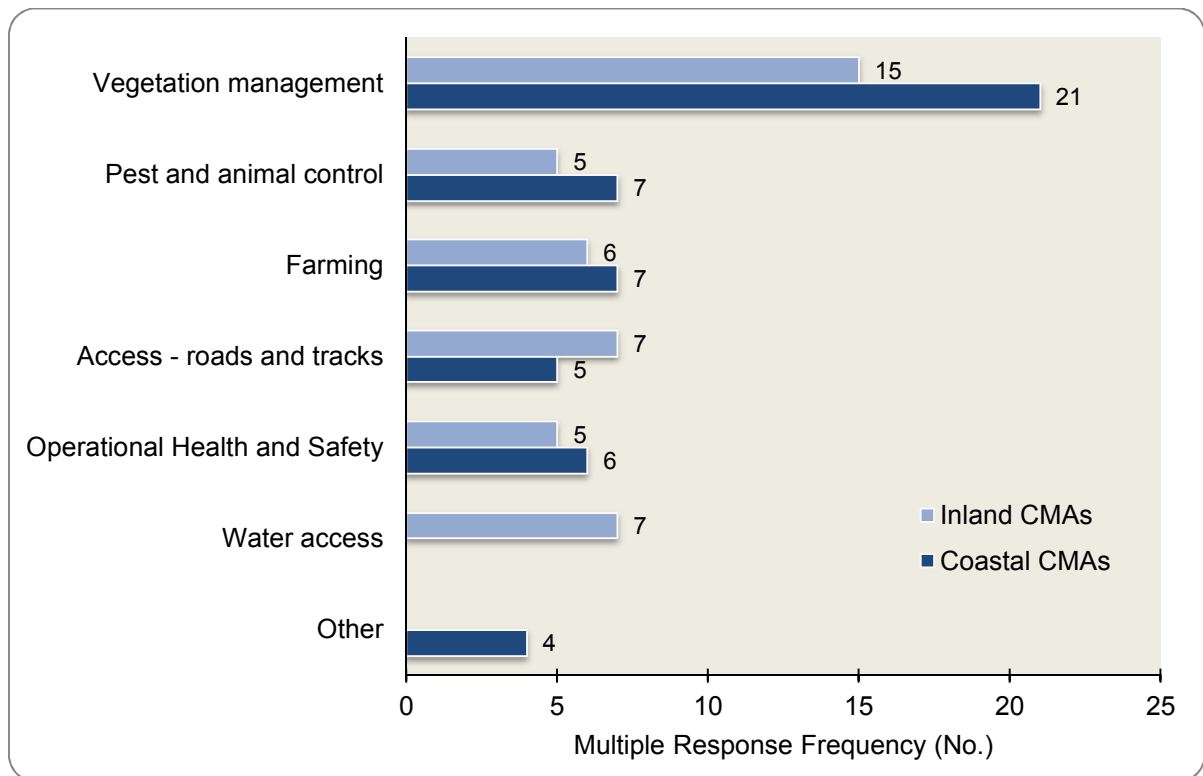
#### 4.6.3 Rural land managers' views regarding Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs)

This section provides comparisons of responses from rural landholders from inland and coastal CMA areas relating to questions on Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs). There were no significant differences in responses between respondents from inland and coastal CMA areas when asked to indicate the RAMAs they had cleared for (see Figure 4.32 and Figure 4.33). However, as shown in Figure 4.34, rural landholders from inland CMA areas (33%) were more uncertain regarding what clearing was allowed, when compared to rural landholders from coastal CMA areas (16%).



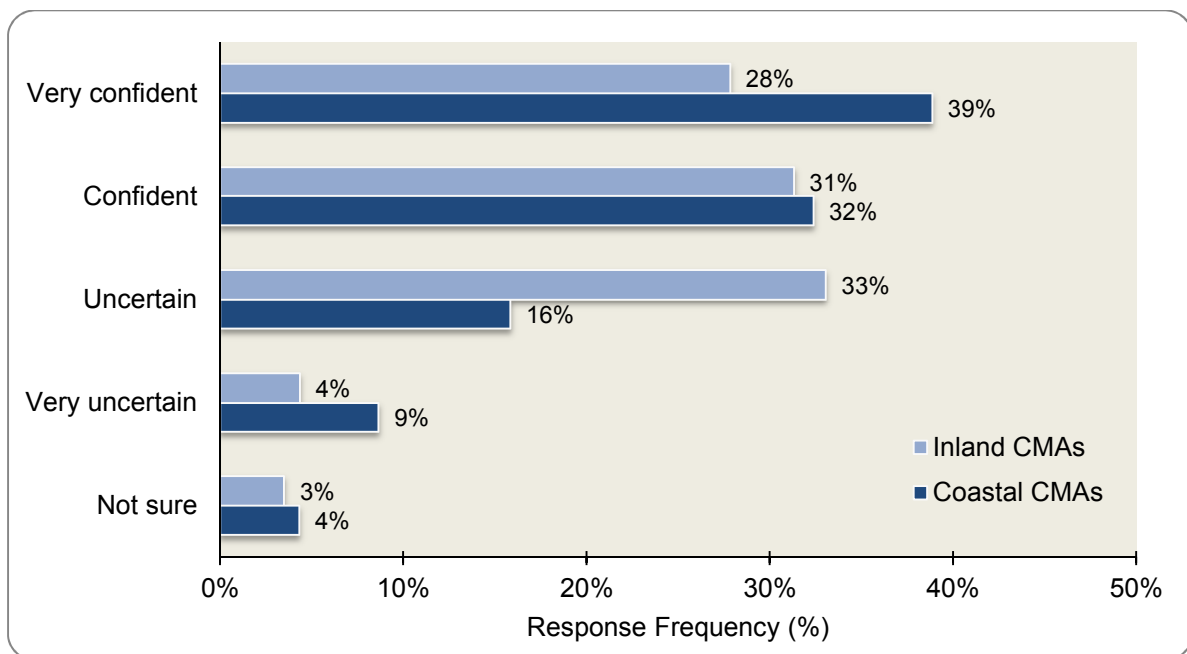
*Note: Based on 286 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for inland CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in inland CMAs. Percentages for coastal CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in coastal CMAs.*

**Figure 4.32: Have you cleared for any of the following routine agricultural management activities, also known as RAMAs?**



Note: Some of the activities listed in the chart above are not considered RAMAs. Frequency counts are based on the 71 respondents that answered "other" to the question "Have you cleared for any of the following routine agricultural management activities, also known as RAMAs?" Multiple responses were permitted.

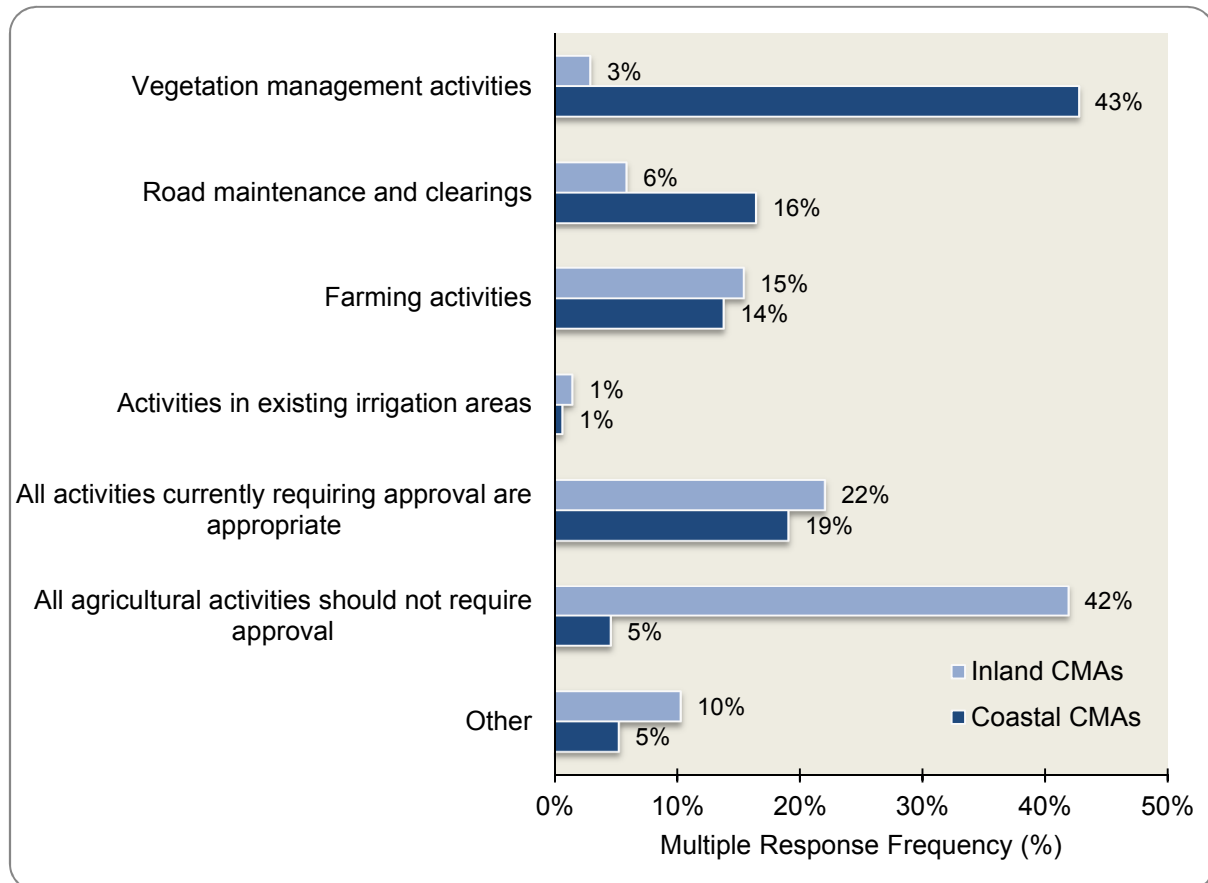
**Figure 4.33: Other routine agricultural management activity, please specify.**



Note: Based on 259 respondents.

**Figure 4.34: When you cleared for a routine agricultural management activity, how confident were you that you understood what clearing was allowed?**

Figure 4.35 compares respondents from inland and coastal CMA areas on activities that they felt should be considered RAMAs. Forty-three per cent of respondents from coastal CMA areas stated that vegetation management activities should be considered RAMAs, while only 3% of respondents from inland CMAs felt this should be the case. Forty-two per cent of respondents from inland CMA areas felt that all agricultural activities should not require approval, as compared to only 5% of respondents from coastal CMA areas.

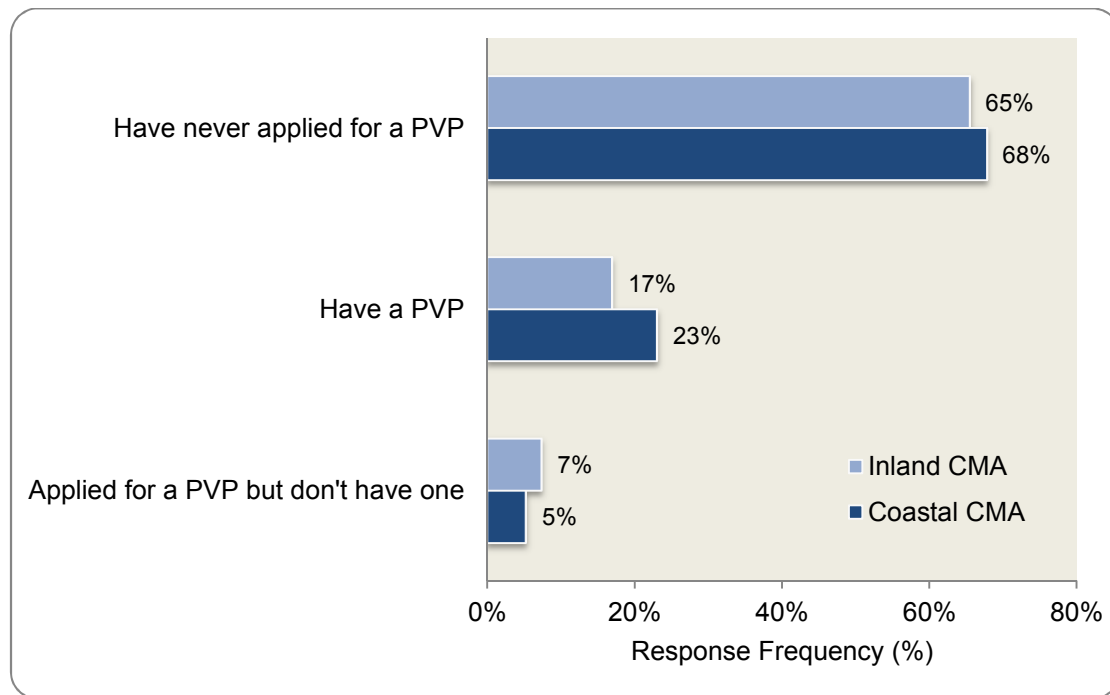


*Note: Some of the suggestions provided by respondents are related to activities that are already considered RAMAs. Based on 249 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for inland CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in inland CMAs. Percentages for coastal CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in coastal CMAs.*

**Figure 4.35: What agricultural activities that require clearing of native vegetation do you think should be considered as routine agricultural management activities?**

#### 4.6.4 Rural land managers' views regarding Property Vegetation Plans (PVPs)

Figure 4.36 compares responses relating to Property Vegetation Plans (PVPs) between rural landholders from inland and coastal CMA areas. The figure shows little difference between responses from rural landholders from inland and coastal CMA areas, although overall, rural land managers from coastal CMA areas were more likely to have a PVP.

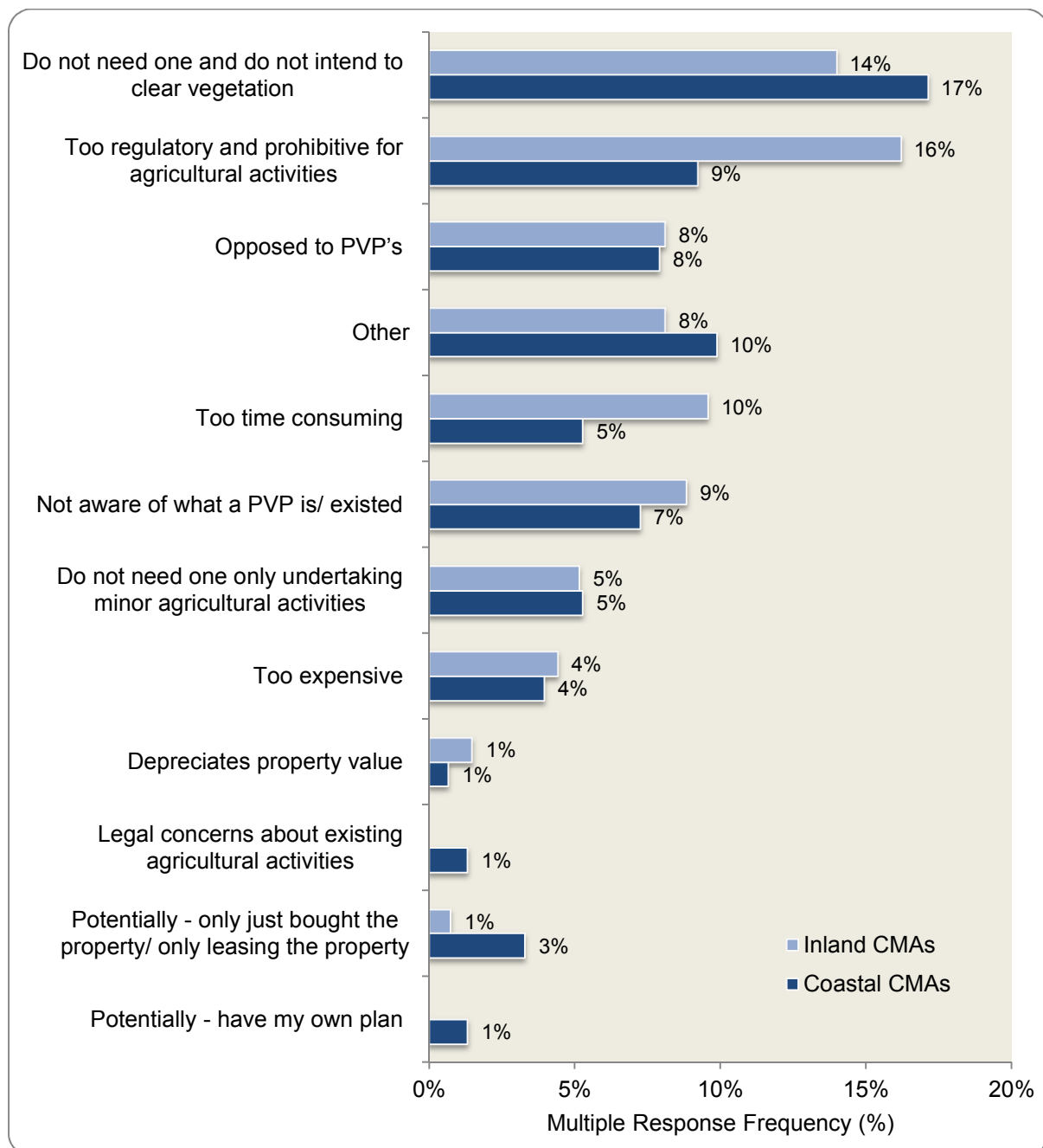


**Figure 4.36 Have you applied for a PVP?**

*Note: Based on 268 respondents. There was a small percentage of the total sample who did not respond to this question.*

Figure 4.37 compares inland and coastal rural land managers' responses to why they did not apply for a PVP. The figure shows that inland rural land managers were more likely than coastal land managers to state that PVPs were too regulatory or that they didn't know what a PVP was. Whereas coastal land managers were more likely to state that they had not applied for a PVP because they did not need one / were not intending to clear vegetation.

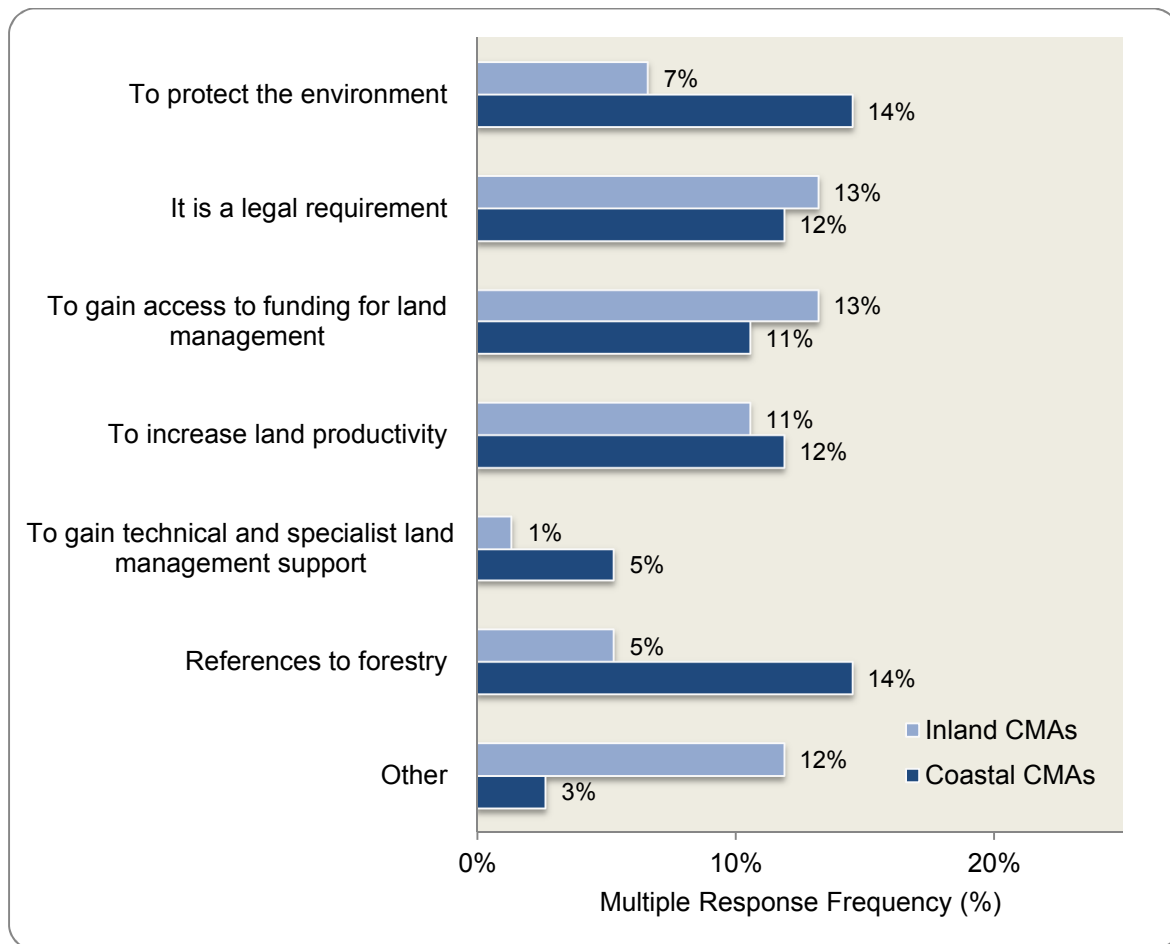




Note: Based on 170 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents that did not have a PVP and had not applied for a PVP.

**Figure 4.37: Why haven't you applied for a Property Vegetation Plan?**

Figure 4.38 compares rural land managers from inland and coastal CMA areas on reasons why they applied for a PVP. Seven per cent of respondents from coastal CMA areas stated protecting the environment as a reason for applying for a PVP, as compared to 4% of respondents from inland CMA areas. Additionally, 7% of respondents from coastal CMA areas referred to forestry, as compared to 3% of respondents from inland CMA areas. Seven per cent of respondents from inland CMA areas listed other reasons for applying for a PVP, as compared to 1% of respondents from coastal CMA areas. Selected comments relating to why respondents applied for a PVP are provided in Table 4-2 in Section 4.5.

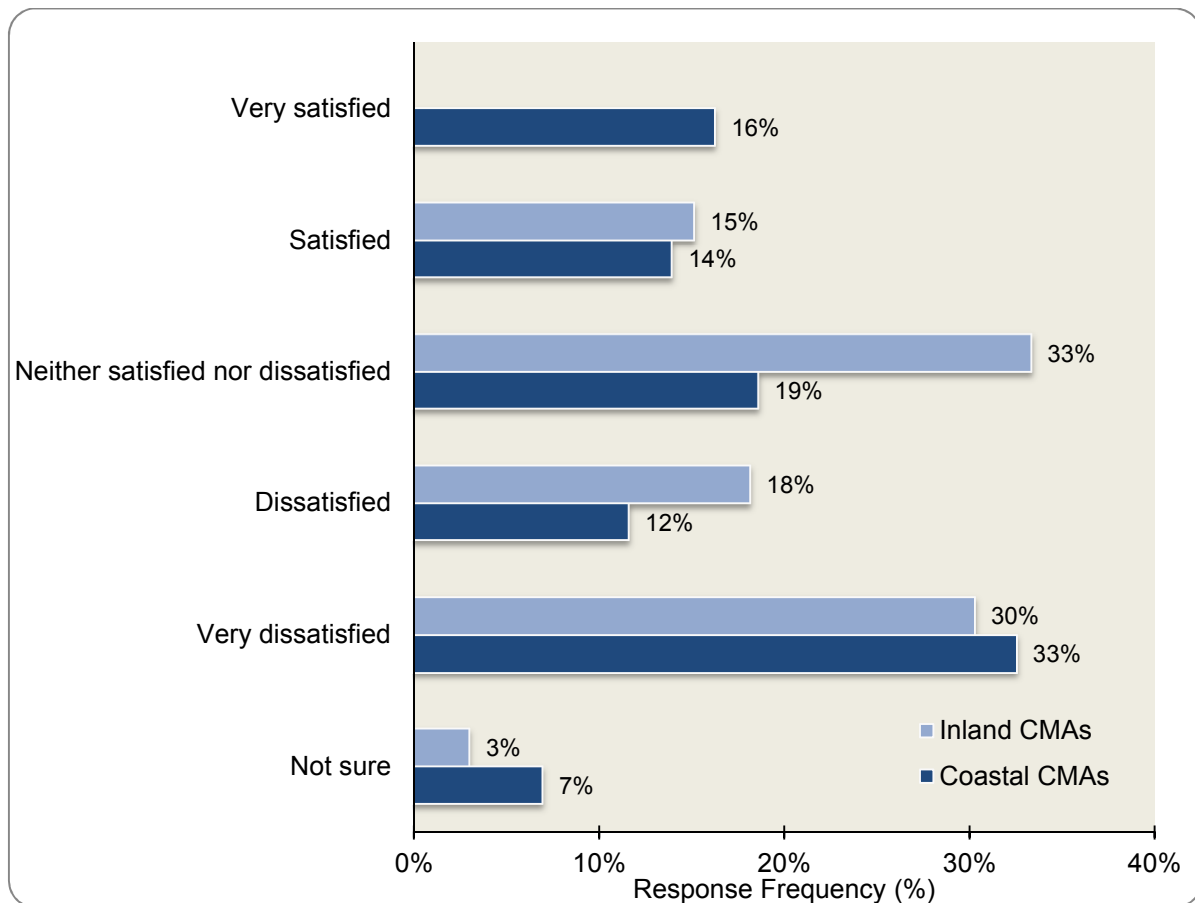


Note: Based on 71 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents that either had a PVP or had applied for a PVP.

**Figure 4.38: Why did you apply for a Property Vegetation Plan?**

#### 4.6.4.1 Satisfaction with PVP process

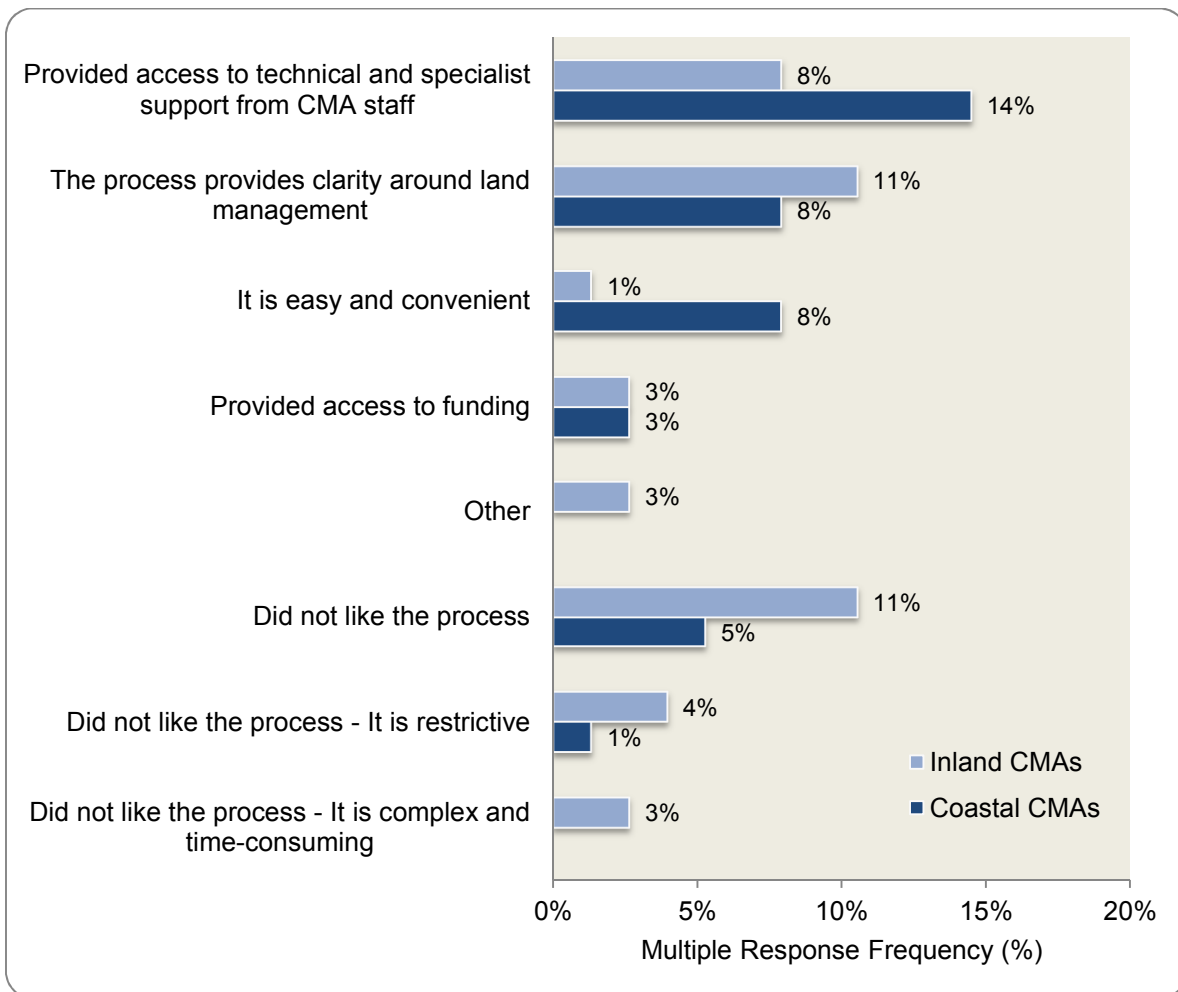
Figure 4.39 compares responses from rural landholders relating to their satisfaction with the PVP process. Interestingly, 16% of respondents from coastal CMA areas said they were very satisfied with the PVP process, as compared to no respondents from inland CMA areas. Thirty-three per cent of respondents from inland CMA areas were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the PVP process, as compared to 19% of respondents from coastal CMA areas. Generally, rural land managers from coastal CMA areas were more satisfied with the PVP process.



Note: Based on 76 respondents.

**Figure 4.39: How satisfied are you with the Property Vegetation Plan (PVP) process?**

Figure 4.40 compares responses from land managers from inland and coastal CMA areas (who either had a PVP or had applied for one) on what they liked about the PVP process. Although there are no obvious differences in responses between respondents from inland and coastal CMA areas, 9% of rural land managers from inland CMA areas stated that they did not like the PVP process, as compared to 4% of rural land managers from coastal CMA areas.

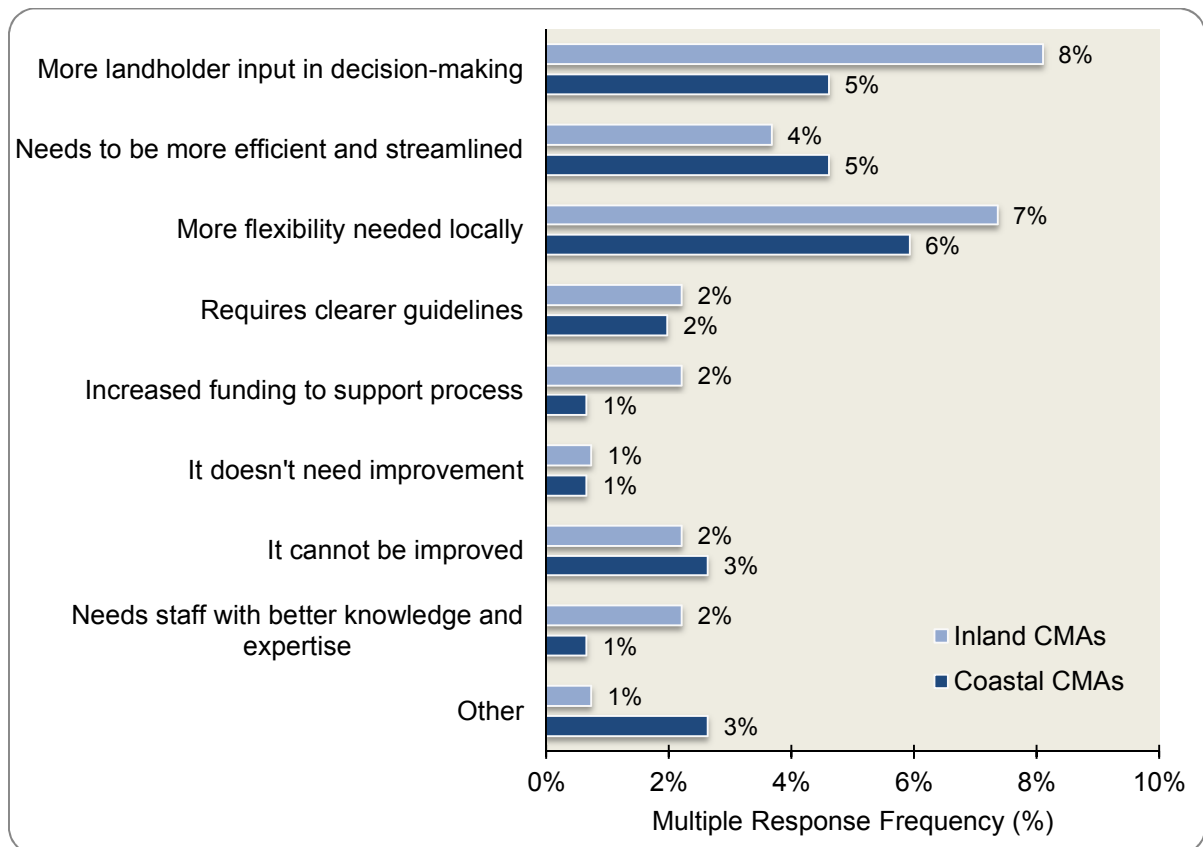


*Note: Based on 55 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who either had a PVP or had applied for a PVP.*

**Figure 4.40: What did you like about the Property Vegetation Plan process?**

#### 4.6.4.2 Suggestions for improvement to PVPs

Figure 4.41 compares the responses from respondents from inland and coastal CMA areas relating to their suggestions regarding improvements to the PVP process. Rural land managers from inland CMA areas were more likely to identify more landholder input and greater flexibility than their coastal counterparts.

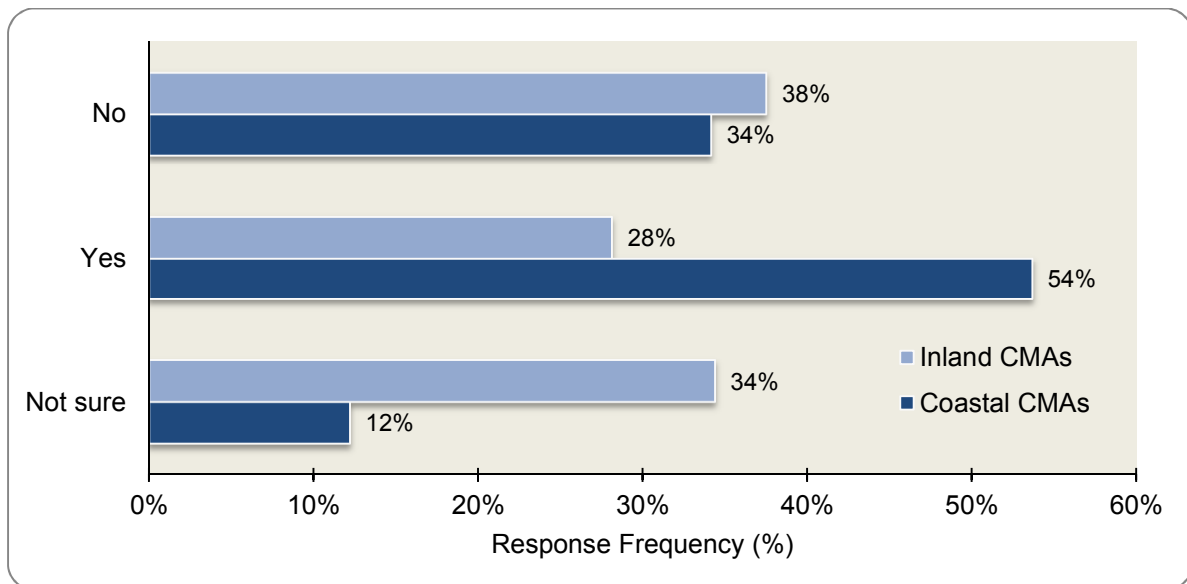


*Note: Based on 61 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for inland CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in inland CMAs. Percentages for coastal CMAs reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents in coastal CMAs.*

**Figure 4.41: How do you think the Property Vegetation Plan process can be improved?**

#### 4.6.4.3 Recommendation of PVP

Figure 4.42 compares responses from rural land managers from inland and coastal CMA areas (who either have a PVP or have applied for one) on whether they would recommend a PVP to other landholders. Fifty-four per cent of respondents from coastal CMA areas said they would recommend a PVP, as compared to 28% of respondents from inland CMA areas. There was no obvious difference between rural land managers from inland and coastal CMA areas who said they would not recommend seeking approval for a PVP. Thirty-four per cent of rural land managers from inland CMA areas were not sure if they would recommend seeking approval for a PVP, as compared to 12% of rural land managers from coastal CMA areas.



*Note: Based on 282 respondents.*

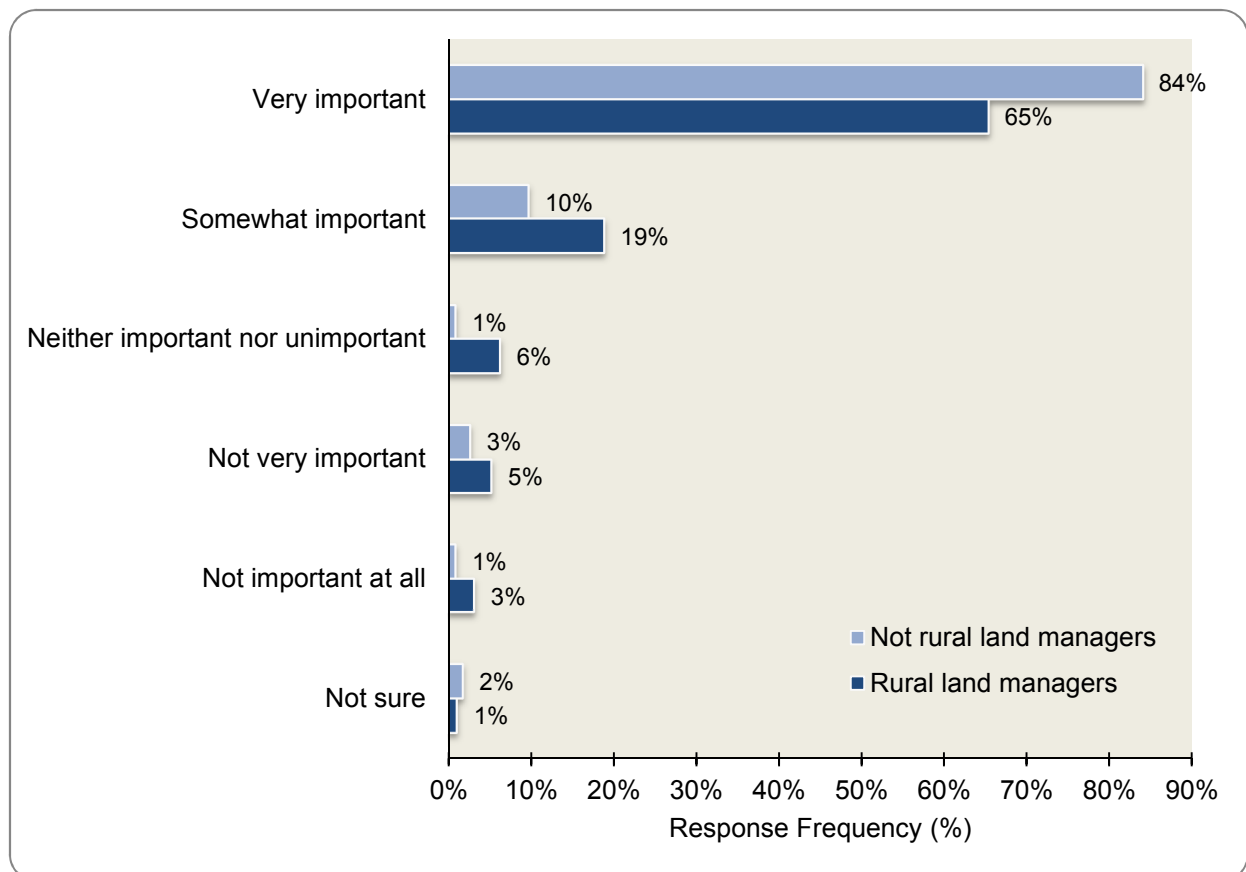
**Figure 4.42: Would you recommend seeking approval for a Property Vegetation Plan (PVP) to other landholders?**

## 5.0 Comparative Assessment of Rural Land Manager and Other Survey Responses

Several analyses were conducted to identify any important differences in responses between respondents who were rural land managers and respondents who were not rural land managers (71% and 27% of the survey sample respectively, see Section 2.1). This section outlines the findings of these analyses.

### 5.1 Importance of native vegetation

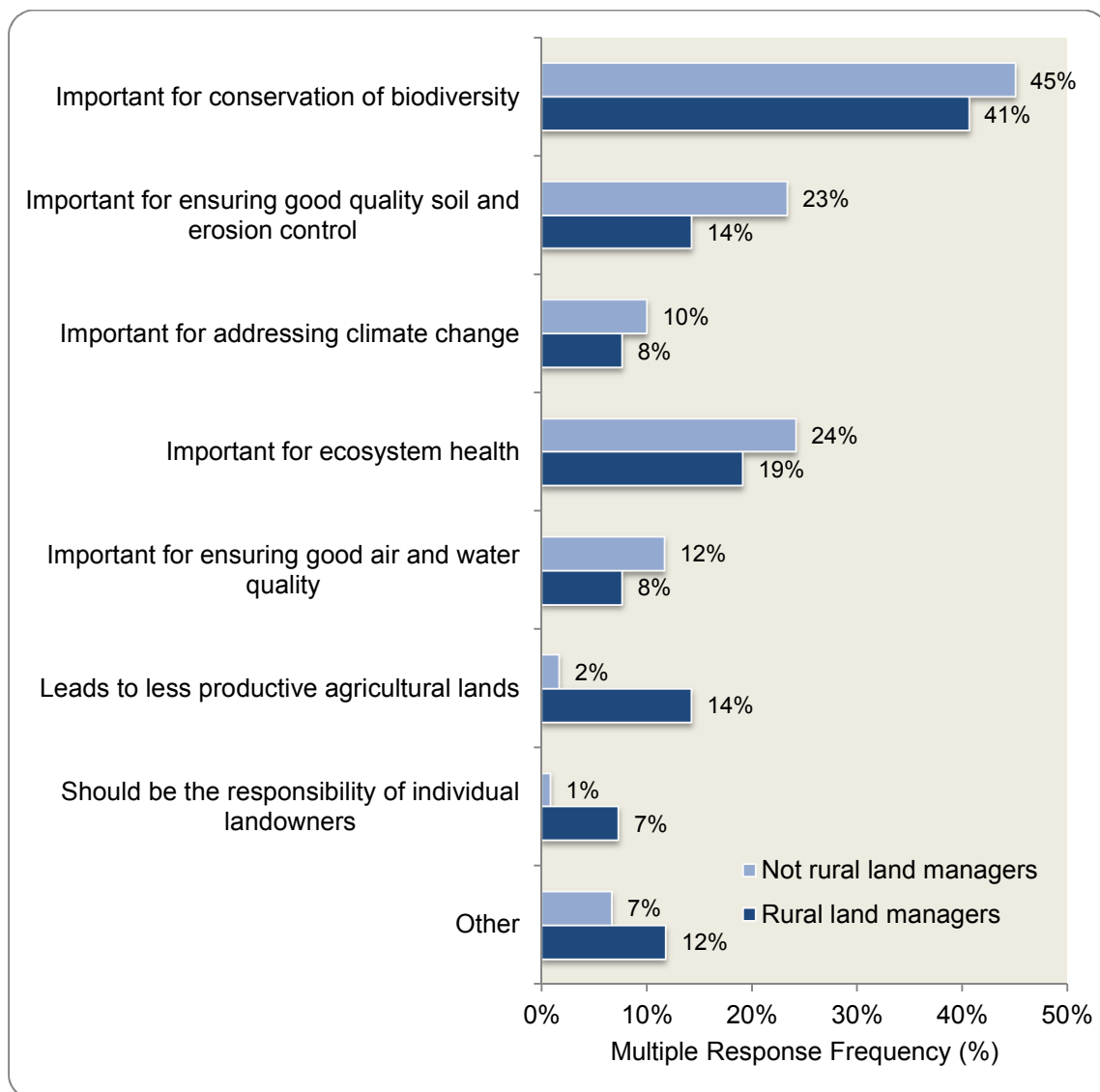
As shown in Figure 5.1, rural land managers were not as likely as other survey respondents to view native vegetation as important to viable agriculture. Although overall, the majority (84%) of rural land managers considered native vegetation to be very or somewhat important (compared to 94% of other survey respondents).



Note: Based on 399 respondents.

**Figure 5.1: How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?**

The reasons provided for these opinions on native vegetation are shown in Figure 5.2. From this analysis, it is clear that rural land managers are more likely to state that native vegetation leads to less productive lands (14% of rural land managers) and that it should be the responsibility of the individual landholder (7% of rural land managers), as opposed to respondents who were not rural landholders. Non-rural land managers were more likely to identify environmental concerns such as biodiversity conservation, climate change and ecosystem health as reasons for the importance of native vegetation compared to rural land managers.



*Note: Based on responses to the question "How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in NSW?" There were 340 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for rural land managers reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who manage a rural property. Percentages for non rural land managers reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who do not manage a rural property.*

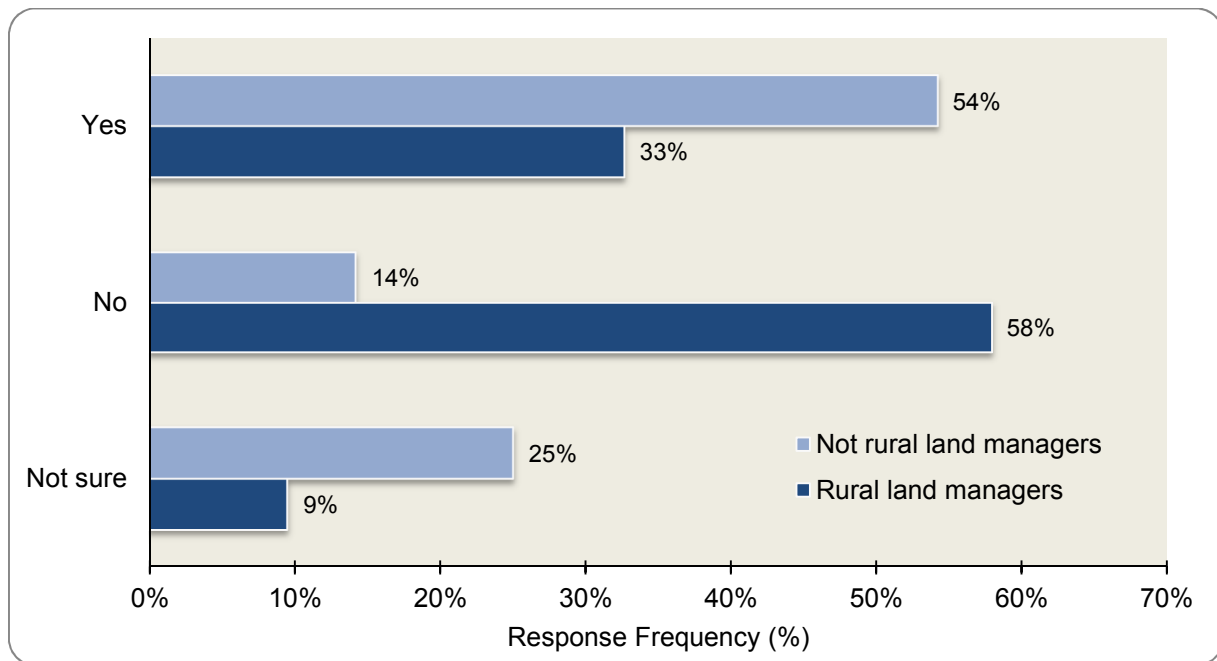
**Figure 5.2: What has made you feel this way?**

## 5.2 Regulation of native vegetation

Figure 5.3 to Figure 5.8 compares the responses relating to native vegetation laws of respondents who were rural land managers and those who were not. These findings show some clear differences of opinion between these groups.

As shown in Figure 5.3, over half of the rural land managers (58%), compared to only 14% of respondents who were not rural land managers, felt that the rules did not allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation, including clearing, so that normal agricultural activities could be undertaken. As would be expected, that was a significantly higher level of uncertainty about this question from those who are not rural land managers (25%) compared to rural land managers (9%).



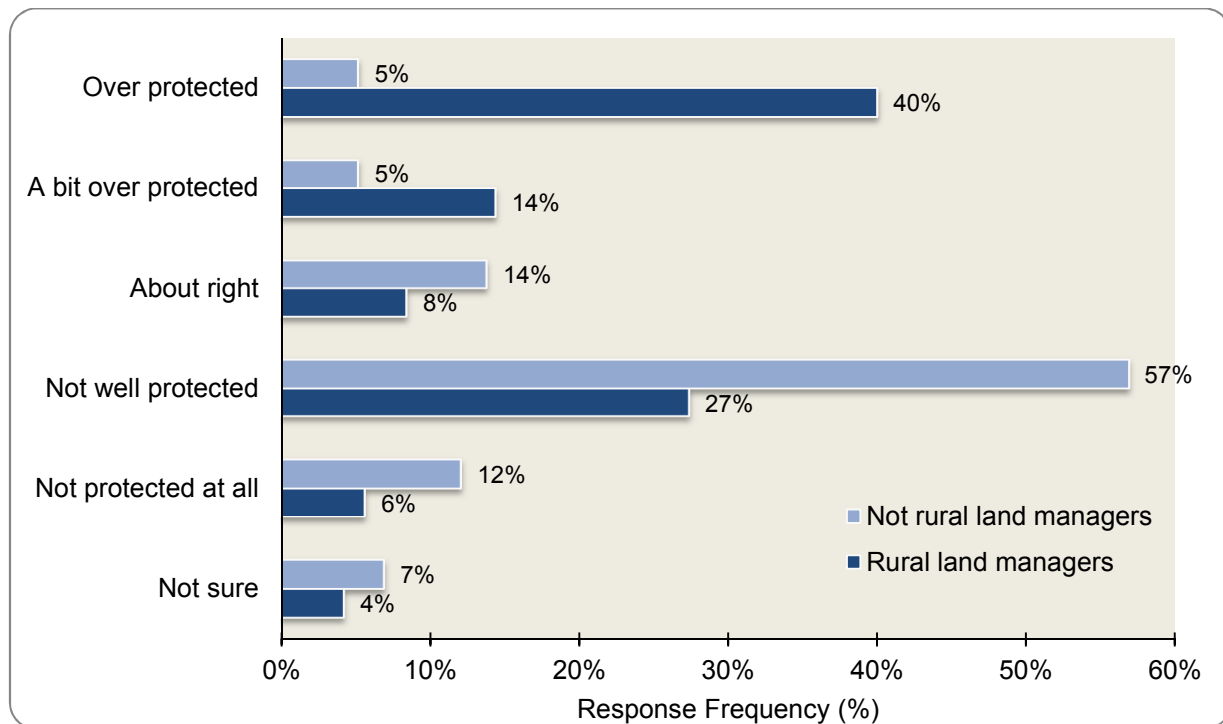


Note: Based on 397 respondents.

**Figure 5.3: Do you think the rules allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation, including clearing, so that normal agricultural activities can be undertaken?**

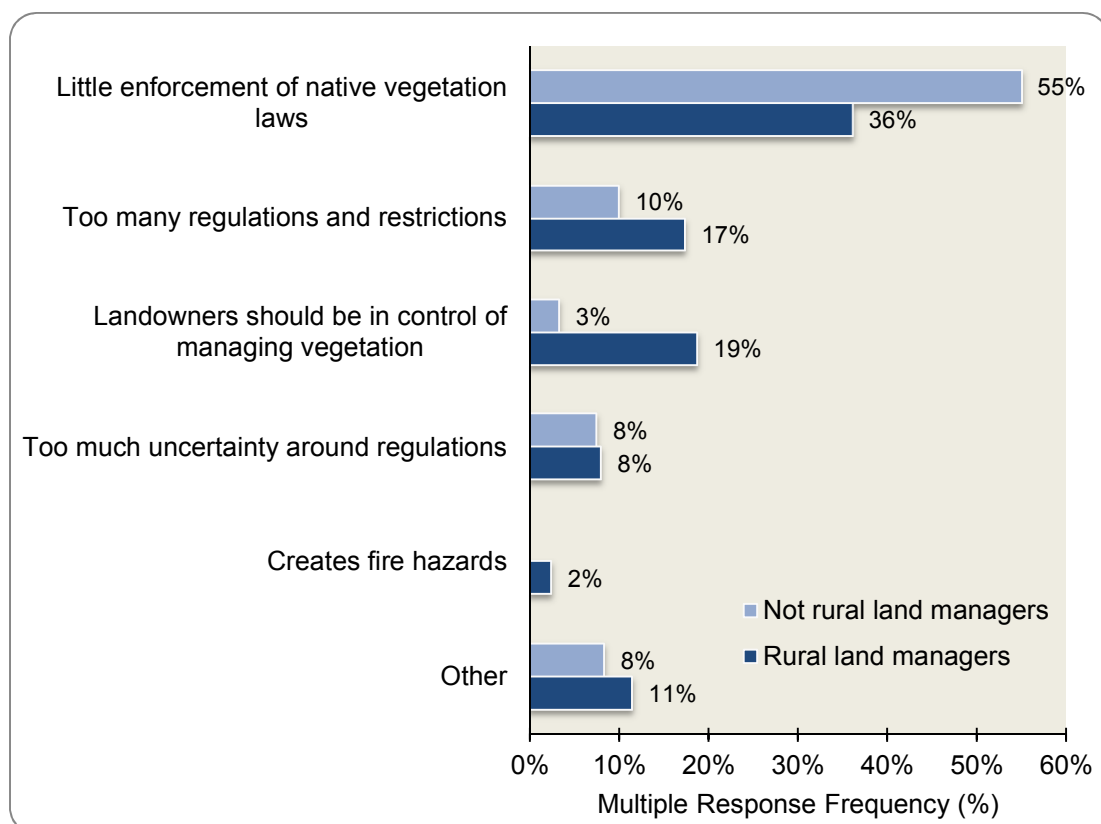
Figure 5.4 demonstrates the differences in opinions between respondents who were rural land managers and those who were not regarding the protection of native vegetation under current native vegetation laws. Just over half (54%) of the rural land managers surveyed felt native vegetation was overprotected. While only 10% of respondents who were not rural land managers felt this way. The majority (69%) of respondents who were not rural land managers actually felt that native vegetation was either not well protected or not protected at all.

Figure 5.5 shows the reasons respondents gave for their responses. The most common response from both non land managers and land managers was that there is little enforcement of native vegetation laws (55% and 35% respectively). In these responses rural land managers more often stated there were too many rules (17%) and that management of native vegetation should be the responsibility of the landholder (19%).



Note: Based on 402 respondents.

**Figure 5.4: How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws?**

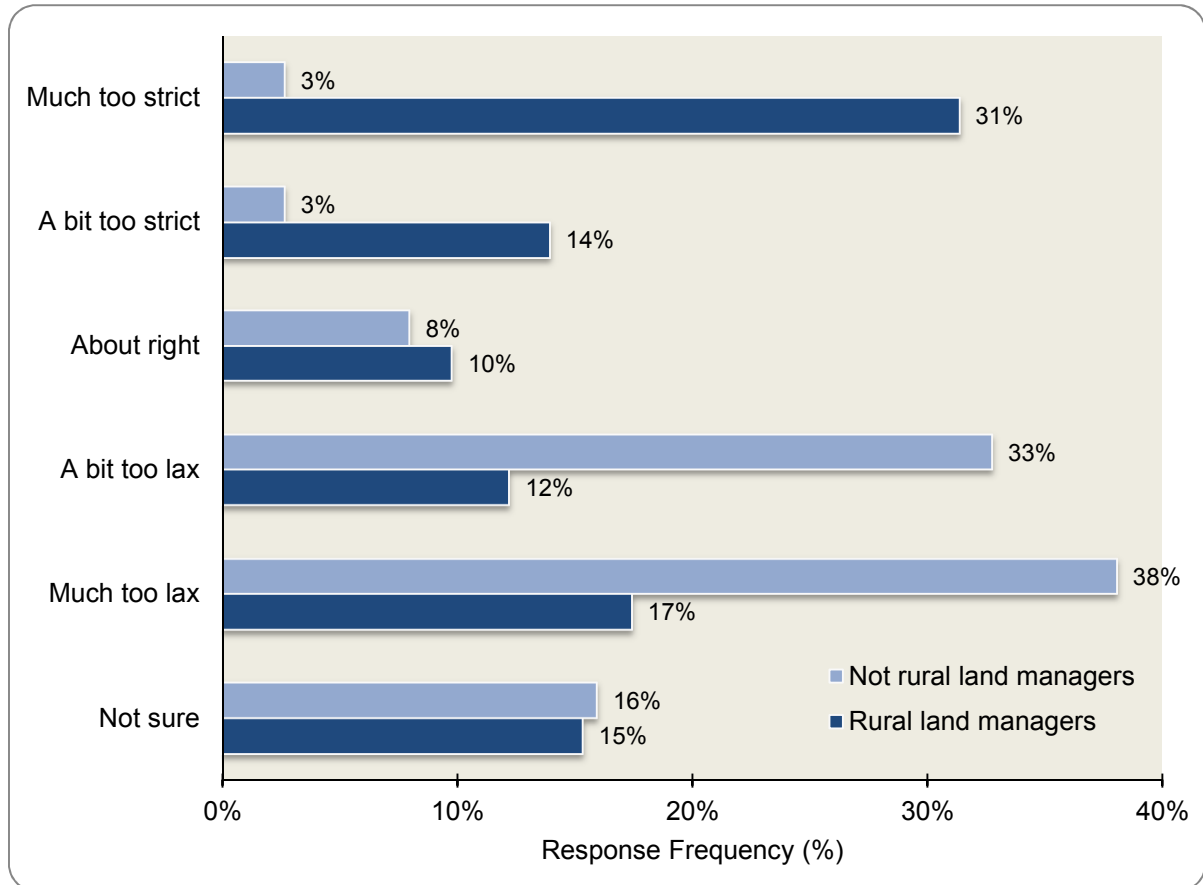


Note: Based on responses to the question "How well do you think native vegetation is protected under the current native vegetation laws?" There were 355 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for rural land managers reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who manage a rural property. Percentages for non rural land managers reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who do not manage a rural property.

**Figure 5.5: What has made you feel this way?**

### 5.2.1 Enforcement of native vegetation laws

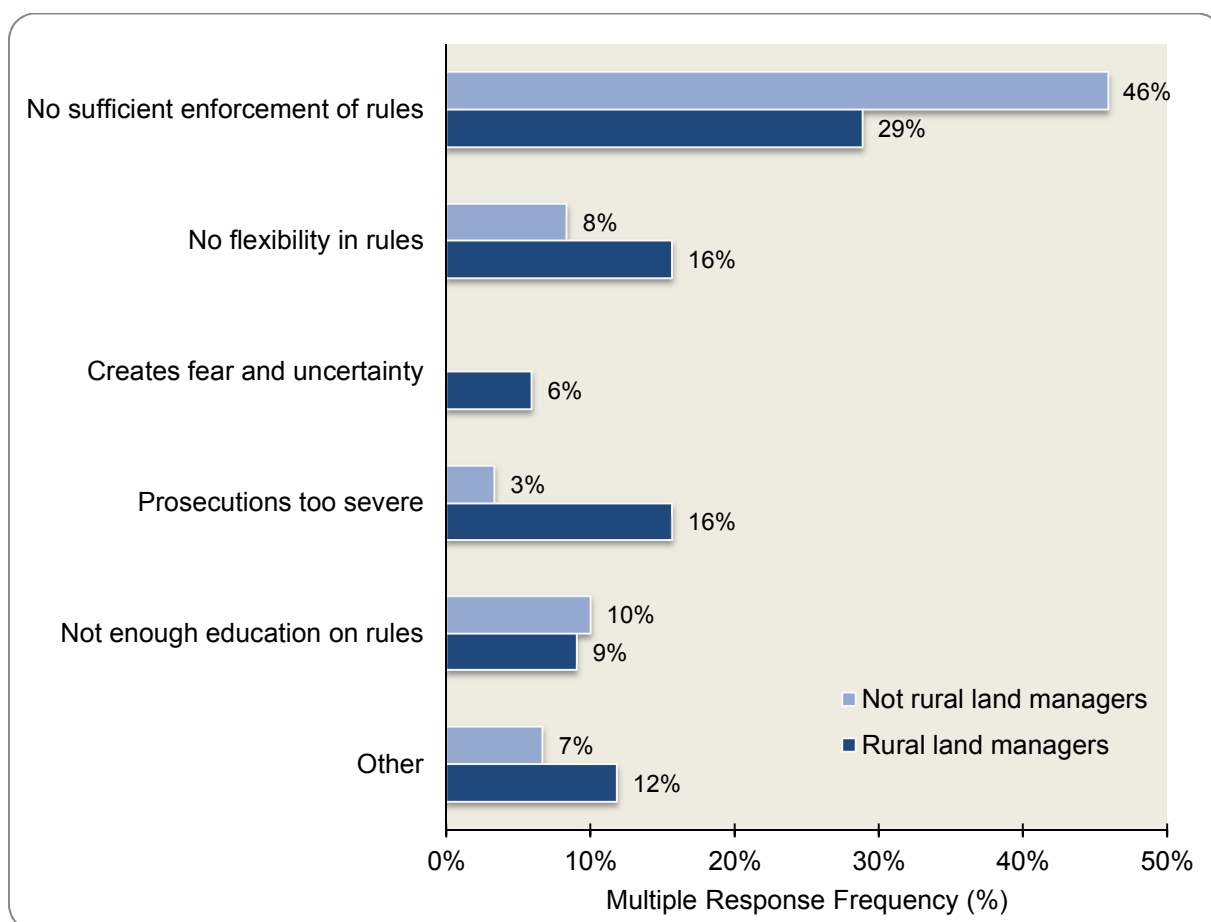
The issue of enforcement provides perhaps the clearest distinction between rural land manager and other respondents' views. As can be seen in Figure 5.6, a total of 45% of rural land managers felt that enforcement of the native vegetation rules was too strict, compared to only 6% of respondents who were not rural land managers.



*Note: Based on 401 respondents.*

**Figure 5.6: What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?**

Figure 5.7 shows the reasons given for the responses above. Interestingly, the most common reason given by both non land managers and rural land managers was that there is not sufficient enforcement of rules (46% and 29%). Rural land managers were more likely than non land managers to think that the rules do not provide enough flexibility (16% compared to 8%), prosecutions are too severe (16% compared to 3%) and there is too much uncertainty (6% compared to nil). An almost equal percentage of non-rural land managers and rural land managers felt there was not enough education on the rules (10% and 9% respectively).



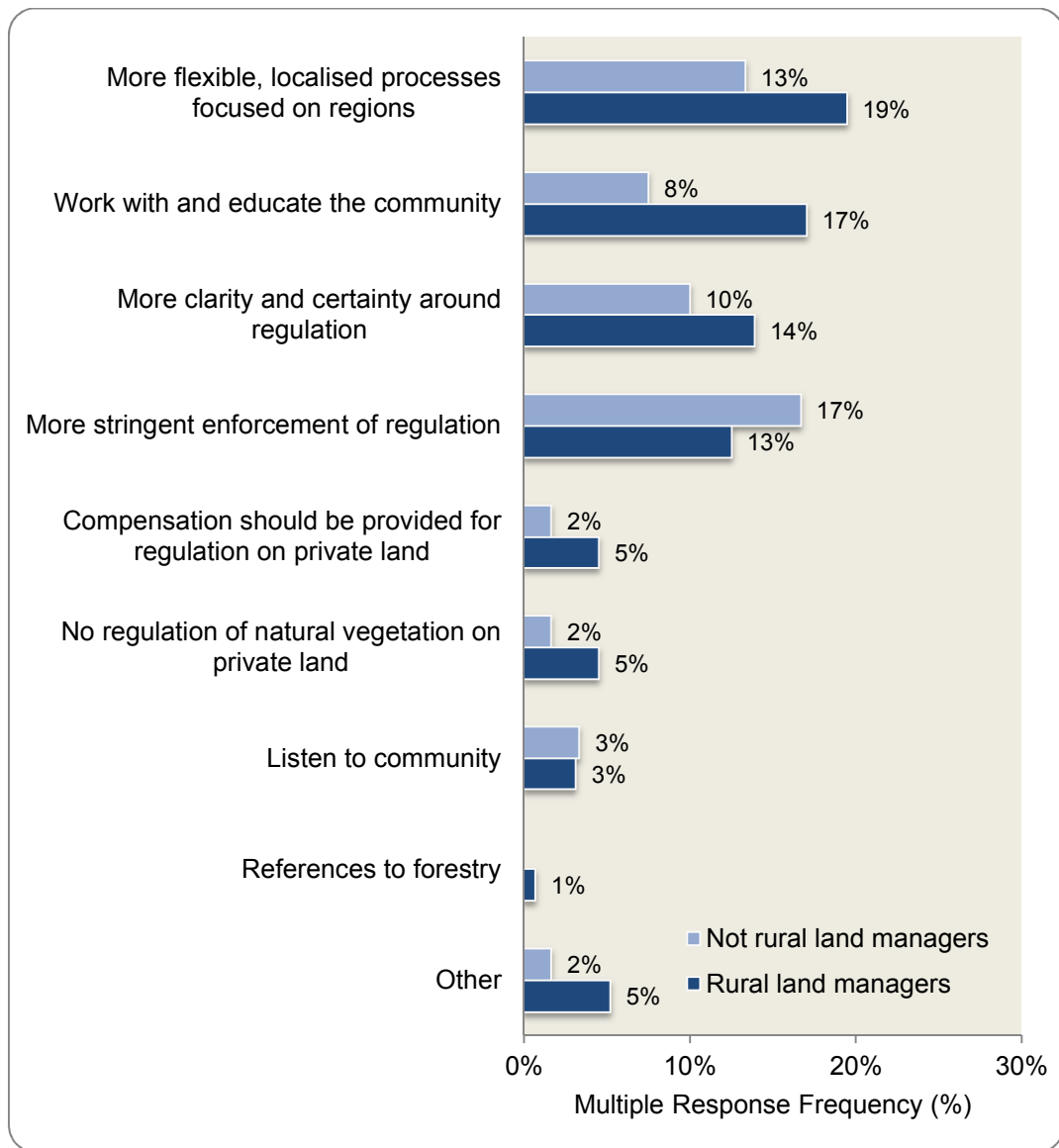
*Note: Based on responses to the question "What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?" There were 327 respondents. Multiple responses were permitted. Percentages for rural land managers reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who manage a rural property. Percentages for non rural land managers reflect the number of respondents that raised the issue, divided by the total number of respondents who do not manage a rural property.*

**Figure 5.7: What has made you feel this way?**

### 5.2.2 Respondents' suggestions for improvement to native vegetation laws

The results in Figure 5.8 show that rural land managers recommended improvements including more flexibility (19%), education (17%) and more clarity (14%) regarding the regulation of native vegetation more than respondents who were not rural land managers. As seen in Section 3.2.2, these responses often highlighted the need for more regionally responsive rules and ongoing engagement and education programs through CMAs, with the need to listen and work with land managers raised as a key suggestion.

Again, respondents who were not rural land managers were more likely to recommend more enforcement of regulations than rural land managers.



Note: Based on 261 respondents.

**Figure 5.8: Please add any information that you feel would help us to improve the regulation of native vegetation.**

## 6.0 Key Findings

This section outlines the key findings of the Native Vegetation Regulation Survey designed and implemented by OEH. The survey obtained a total sample of 408 respondents of which the majority (71%) of respondents were directly involved in the management of a rural property, while 27% of respondents were not.

Key findings of the survey analysis include:

- A significant proportion of respondents were from the Northern Rivers CMA (representing 26% of respondents who provided a postcode and 19% of the total sample)
- 71% of all respondents considered native vegetation to be very important for the viability of agriculture in NSW
- Respondents were split on how well native vegetation is protected under current laws with 43% stating it is not well protected/not protected at all and 42% stating it is over protected/a bit over protected.
- Respondents were also split regarding the enforcement of rules for native vegetation clearing with 41% stating the enforcement of the rules is too lax and 33% stating the enforcement of the rules is too strict.
- The majority of suggestions for improving the regulation of native vegetation related to more flexible and localised processes focused on regions, working with and educating the community, and better enforcement of regulations.

The results indicate some key differences in the views of respondents who were rural land managers and those who were not, as outlined below:

- Rural land managers were more likely than other survey respondents to state that native vegetation regulation leads to less productive lands and that it should be the responsibility of the individual landholder
- Rural land managers were more likely than other survey respondents to state that native vegetation rules did not allow enough flexibility to manage native vegetation so that normal agricultural activities could be undertaken
- 45% of rural land managers felt that the enforcement of the rules for native vegetation management were too strict, compared to only 6% of respondents that were not rural land managers.

The analyses also revealed some key distinctions in the views of respondents from inland and coastal CMA areas, as follows:

- 41% of rural land managers from coastal CMA areas stated that the rules allowed enough opportunity to manage native vegetation, as compared to 23% from inland CMA areas
- 24% of rural land managers from coastal CMA areas stated that the enforcement of rules was much too lax, as compared to 11% from inland CMA areas
- 33% of rural land managers from inland CMA areas were uncertain regarding understanding what clearing was allowed, as compared to 16% from coastal CMA areas
- 54% of rural land managers from coastal CMA areas who either had a PVP or had applied for one said they would recommend seeking approval for a PVP, as compared to 28% from inland CMA areas.

## 7.0 Appendix: Survey Instrument



### Purpose of the survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather information on experiences with the way the government regulates native vegetation. This will inform the Review of the Native Vegetation Regulation.

Your input will help government to identify improvements in the way: native vegetation is regulated, services are delivered and information is made available to the public.

The survey is targeted to those who are involved in the management of a rural property. However, all members of the public are welcome to participate and answer the questions that are relevant to them.

### How to complete this survey

The questions in this survey can be answered by placing a tick in a box or entering your response in the space provided. If you need more space for your responses please attach additional pages.

If you prefer not to answer a question, please skip it. Based on your response you will be asked to skip some questions which are not relevant for you.

The survey should take about fifteen minutes to complete depending on the depth of responses you choose to provide.

### Closing date

The survey will be open until 30 March 2012.

### Submitting the survey

Your survey can be returned to the Office of Environment and Heritage by post, fax or scanned into an email. Alternatively you can complete the survey online at:  
[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/ReviewofNVRegulations.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/ReviewofNVRegulations.htm)

### Privacy

Information collected during this process will not be made publicly available without your written permission, in compliance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) 1998* and will not be used in any other way or for any other purpose by the Office of Environment and Heritage or by any other party.

### For more information on the survey please contact:

Native Vegetation Regulation Review, Conservation Policy Unit  
Landscapes and Ecosystems Conservation Branch  
Office of Environment and Heritage  
Address: PO Box A290, Sydney South NSW 1232  
Phone: 131 555  
Email: [native.vegetation@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:native.vegetation@environment.nsw.gov.au)  
Fax: 02 9995 6791

For more information on the review of the Native Vegetation Regulation please visit: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/reviewofNVRegulations.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/reviewofNVRegulations.htm)





## The survey

1	<p><b>Are you directly involved in the management of a rural property?</b> (please select one answer)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No      <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p> <p><i>If you answered "No" or "Not Sure" please go to Question 4, otherwise please continue.</i></p>
2	<p><b>What is the postcode of your main rural property?</b></p> <p>_____</p>
3	<p><b>What form of primary production, if any, do you have on the main property you manage?</b> (please select all answers that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cropping <input type="checkbox"/> Grazing <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: _____</p>
4	<p><b>How important do you think native vegetation is for the viability of agriculture in New South Wales?</b> (please select one answer)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important <input type="checkbox"/> Neither important nor unimportant <input type="checkbox"/> Not very important <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at all  <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>



5	<b>What has made you feel this way?</b>          
6	<b>Do you think the rules allow enough opportunity to manage native vegetation, including clearing, so that normal agricultural activities can be undertaken?</b> (please select one answer)  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
7	<b>Have you cleared for any of the following routine agricultural management activities, also known as RAMAs? (these activities do not require approval)</b> (please select all answers that apply)  <input type="checkbox"/> Fences, yards and sheds <input type="checkbox"/> Bushfire, personal safety or emergency purposes <input type="checkbox"/> Removal of weeds <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic firewood collection <input type="checkbox"/> Other routine agricultural management activity, please specify _____  <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above  <i>If you selected 'none of the above', please go to Question 9; otherwise please continue.</i>

8 **When you cleared for a routine agricultural management activity, how confident were you that you understood what clearing was allowed?**  
(please select one answer)

- ☐ Very confident  
☐ Confident  
☐ Uncertain  
☐ Very uncertain  
☐ Not sure

9 **What agricultural activities that require clearing of native vegetation do you think should be considered as routine agricultural management activities (and therefore should not require approval)?**

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*If you are not directly involved in the management of a rural property please go to Question 18; otherwise please continue.*

10 **Do you have a Property Vegetation Plan for one or more of the properties you manage?**  
(please select one answer)

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

*If you answered 'Yes' please go to Question 13, otherwise please continue.*

11 **Have you applied for a Property Vegetation Plan for one or more of the properties you manage?**  
(please select one answer)

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

*If you answered 'Yes', please go to Question 13, otherwise please continue.*

12 **Why haven't you applied for a Property Vegetation Plan?**

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*As you have not applied for a Property Vegetation Plan, please go to Question 18.*

13 **Why did you apply for a Property Vegetation Plan?**

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14	<p><b>How satisfied are you with the Property Vegetation Plan process?</b> (please select one answer)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Very dissatisfied  <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>
15	<p><b>What did you like about the Property Vegetation Plan process?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

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**What has made you feel this way?**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

20

**What do you think about how the rules for native vegetation clearing are enforced?**  
(please select one answer)

- ☐ Much too strict  
☐ A bit too strict  
☐ About right  
☐ A bit too lax  
☐ Much too lax  
☐ Not sure

21 **What has made you feel this way?**

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22 **Please add any information that you feel would help us to improve the regulation of native vegetation.**

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## Your agreement

Are you happy for your anonymous comments to be quoted in public documents about the review of the Native Vegetation Regulation?

- ☐ Yes, I am happy for my anonymous comments to be quoted publicly.
- ☐ No, I do not want my comments quoted publicly.

## Your contact details

If you would like a staff member from your local catchment management authority (CMA) to follow up with you about your comments or if you would like to be added to the mailing list for the review of the Native Vegetation Regulation please provide your name and contact details below.

Please select all responses that apply:

- ☐ Yes, I would like a staff member from the CMA to follow-up with me.
- ☐ Yes, I would like to be added to the mailing list for the review of the Native Vegetation Regulation.

If you wish to be contacted further please enter your preferred contact details below.

Given name:	
Surname:	
Residential address:	
Preferred contact phone:	
Preferred contact day and time:	
Email address:	

## Thank you

Thank you for completing the survey. Your involvement has provided valuable information for the review of the Native Vegetation Regulation by helping us to understand your expectations and experiences.

Please check that you have answered as many of the questions as you would like to and return the survey via post, email or fax using the contact details provided on the first page.

OEH 2011/0923