

Let's Keep our Law Against Land-Clearing

I write to encourage you to ensure the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* remains intact with current land-clearing laws to continue to protect native wildlife and bushland. We need to learn from the decades of unsustainable land clearing, when millions of hectares of endangered ecological communities, threatened species habitat and wetlands were bulldozed and burned. The government should uphold strong native vegetation laws so that we don't return to the bad practices of the past.

It is very disappointing to learn that the New South Wales Government is proposing major changes to native vegetation laws that will allow for an increase in land clearing in large areas of the state. It is ridiculous to think that an Australian state government in 2012 would be intent in undoing such ecologically important laws, and take a major step backwards away from environmental conservation.

We can't afford to lose more critical areas of bushland. Native vegetation provides essential environmental, social and economic benefits, including protecting water quality, maintaining soil health and providing wildlife habitat. Our threatened birds, mammals, reptiles and plants are dependent on the important remnant vegetation dotted across heavily cleared landscapes.

The *Native Vegetation Act 2003* has played a critical role in stabilising the extent of native vegetation in New South Wales. The integrity of the legislative scheme is underpinned by the application of detailed regulations and a robust methodology for the assessment of environmental outcomes. Without this law, land clearing will be largely uncontrolled, with vast amounts of privately owned bushland at risk of being unsustainably clear-felled, with the local wildlife population to face its full consequence.

Particularly, the proposals to weaken existing protections by allowing clearing of invasive native species and thinning of native vegetation without advice and approval from Catchment Management Authorities has the potential to result in the loss of hundreds of thousands of hectares of native vegetation and native species extinction.

Savings in administration costs and reductions in "green tape" should not be achieved at the expense of the essential environmental, social and economic benefits provided by native vegetation.

I ask you to consider strongly a balanced and earthed approach to this reform process and ensure environmental protection laws remain strong and proud within the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*. For the sake of the future of our forests, wildlife and wildlands, I urge you.

Regards,
Jordan Petzer