

SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW OF THE NATIVE VEGETATION REGULATION

GARLAND LANDCARE GROUP

Garland Landcare has been in operation for over twenty years and in that time has received government assistance for many conservation projects.

Our group members have the custodianship of lands which have remained in their families for generations. Our intention is to ensure that there is a sustainable future for these enterprises.

Our experience leads us to offer these comments on the proposed regulation.

ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY (EOAM)

Much of the landscape in our area has Endangered Ecological Community status. It has been our long term goal to rehabilitate this land, and, in particular, to connect and enlarge the Grassy Box Woodland still existing.

It would appear that the EOAM does not recognise the importance of maintaining remnant vegetation where it exists and allows for the removal of trees which have taken hundreds of years to grow and their replacement with tube stock.

This process devastates the existing ecological community, not only trees but grasses and fauna, including endangered species. The new trees will require many decades to establish. Meanwhile we have lost flora, fauna and productivity through the destruction of biodiversity, loss of healthy soil structure and the devastating effects of uncontrolled water flows.

ROUTINE AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES (RAMA)

We recognise the need for land managers to carry out routine maintenance without the need for an approval process however we are concerned about the use of subdivisions to enable excessive clearing of adjoining areas. We are also concerned about the relaxation of controls over the clearing methods which can be used.

In the case of removal of mature box and redgum trees for the purpose of extensive cropping, we believe advice from the local landcare group should be sought in conjunction with state regulatory authorities. We strongly believe this consultative process would improve the success of projects of this kind while ensuring less destruction of habitat.

PROPERTY VEGETATION PLANS (PVPs)

We are seriously concerned about the lack of consultation with neighbouring landholders when PVPs are put in place and removal of existing landscape is approved, as we are also about the lack of auditing and monitoring of activities under PVPs.

Our aim is to connect our landscapes across our whole landcare area for the protection of the environment and the management of the catchments of our waterways. The activities of one landholder can seriously impact many others.

We therefore urgently request the inclusion of a consultative requirement in the PVP process. It seems ridiculous that we must through a consultation and local government approval process for minor works such as installing a driveway or a shed but a neighbour may remove forest and/or scattered mature box and redgum trees which have stood for hundreds of years, without consultation or warning.

Further, our experience over many years tells us that not all the tube stock trees planted will survive. It will be fifty years before the new plantings can be called mature, with hollows in the branches for birds to nest and

safely rear their young. Where new plantings are made there should be a monitoring process to ensure their survival.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

These concerns have immediate relevance to our area. Recently a company, part of the Teys Group, has purchased a large aggregation of properties in our locality.

Although there has been no form of consultation and no information formally available, we have heard from local contractors that the new owners have applied to clear many hectares of old Grassy Box Woodland and replace it with tube stock. These woodlands are, of course, an EEC and should be protected under legislation.

This is devastating news at a time when we are receiving government funding to protect and enlarge the existing woodlands on our own farms. We realise too, the very negative impact on the ecology of our area this clearing will have. A recent Flora and Fauna Survey, funded by government, has identified a number of endangered species in the area including diamond firetails and microbats.

It would appear to us that the EOAM and PVP processes have failed to recognise both the legislative protection this area enjoys and the ecological impact of the proposed activity.

We are at a loss to understand how government funds can be wasted in this way, with the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority contemplating approving the removal of what “Caring for Country” is paying us to maintain and increase.

Kay Lord

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