

23 August 2012

Native Vegetation Regulation Review  
Conservation Policy and Strategy Section  
Office of Environment and Heritage  
Level 12  
PO Box A290  
Sydney South NSW 1232

Dear Madam/Sir

**Re: BirdLife Australia submission on the Review of the Native Vegetation Regulation.**

BirdLife Australia is the largest independent not-for-profit organisation devoted to the future of Australia's birdlife, with many members and supporters throughout NSW.

BirdLife Australia submits that New South Wales should adhere to a policy of reversing the decline in both the quality and extent of native vegetation, and that strong regulation of vegetation clearing must form the core of that policy.

The birds and biological diversity of New South Wales are in steep decline, as the following excerpt from the 2009 State of the Environment Report reveals (DECCW 2009, Chapter 7):

"Just over a quarter of native terrestrial vertebrate species are monitored sufficiently in NSW to allow an assessment of sustainability at the statewide scale. The relatively large number of assessments of birds reflects the regular surveys conducted by Birds Australia [now BirdLife Australia] for the Atlas of Australian Birds ....

The sustainability assessments show that 64% of all fauna species that are assessable and 65% of birds have a moderate or greater risk of extinction .... The data for birds, based on 217 species (48% of all species), reflects clearly detectable contractions in range over the past 10 years for a majority of the species assessed.

Prospects for the long-term sustainability of many of the bird species assessed are considered poor, and this data is the clearest evidence available that the decline in species appears to be ongoing. While there is insufficient data to describe recent trends in other vertebrate groups, there is little reason to expect outcomes to be dissimilar, especially as birds were the most resilient group in terms of historical declines ...."

The threats leading to this decline include pest animals and weeds, alteration of natural flow regimes of rivers, streams, floodplains and wetlands, competition from feral honeybees, loss of hollow-bearing trees, removal of dead wood and dead trees, clearing and changes to native vegetation and climate change (DEH 2012; State of the Environment 2011 Committee 2011). The gross alienation of land and its conversion to non-native vegetation land uses is the cause of much of this decline.

**BirdLife Australia**

Suite 2-05  
60 Leicester Street  
Carlton VIC 3053

T 03 9347 0757

F 03 9347 9323

[info@birdlife.org.au](mailto:info@birdlife.org.au)  
[birdlife.org.au](http://birdlife.org.au)

ABN 75 149 124 774

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Strong laws and regulations are vital to protect bushlands and bird habitats from clearing. Experience in NSW and around the country shows that without strong regulation, clearing can not be effectively controlled and limited.

BirdLife urges that proposals to weaken protection of “invasive” native vegetation, paddock trees and small patches of vegetation in cultivation should be rejected. We believe that proposals to allow thinning of native vegetation without reference to CMAs, and burning of native vegetation as routine agricultural management should also be abandoned. We oppose weakening, and urge strengthening of offset rules (see our policy attached).

In summary we strongly support native vegetation regulation as a means of reversing the historic and on-going decline in the ecosystems and birdlife of New South Wales. It is crucial that NSW plays its part in Australia meeting international obligations under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. This responsibility can only be adequately acquitted with strong regulations to reverse the loss of the bushlands of New South Wales.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely

Charlie Sherwin  
Conservation Manager

## References

DECCW 2009, New South Wales State of the Environment 2009, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, Sydney.

DEH 2012,  
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/KeyThreateningProcessesByDoctype.htm>

State of the Environment 2011 Committee 2011, Australia State of the Environment 2011, DSEWPac.