



Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc.

Post Office Box 607, Gordon NSW 2072 Australia

23rd August 2012

Submission re the draft *Native Vegetation Regulation*

Our organisation strongly opposes this proposal to allow thinning, burning and clearing of native vegetation without assessment and approval by a Catchment Management Authority. If adopted the cumulative impacts on natural environments across NSW will have wide ranging detrimental impacts on water quality, the health of soils and on wildlife.

Thinning, burning and clearing must not be classified as 'routine agricultural management activities'. It is only with the assessment of the whole catchment by qualified Catchment Management Authority staff that cumulative impacts on the environment can be effectively assessed and detrimental outcomes avoided for the benefit of all people living in the catchment.

Native vegetation and the wildlife that inhabits it, has social and economic benefits for people across the state. For example, insect-eating bats which depend on hollows in old trees for roosts, take the night shift in controlling insects including locusts, and moths which predate on cotton crops. Although their environmental services have not been quantified, these tiny animals provide economic benefits to farmers and residents by controlling insect populations.

Paddock trees have an economic benefit beyond the individual farmer's property. If paddock trees and small patches of native vegetation are removed from rural landscapes just so farmers can use wider machinery, then there will be a serious loss of amenity for tourists and residents. Furthermore research has shown that microbats will roost in intact native vegetation and feed on beetles and moths around paddock trees. Therefore our Society opposes any clearing without prior assessment by qualified staff and strongly objects to weakening of offset rules.

Many landowners have been caring for their land, regenerating native vegetation and planting native vegetation corridors to support healthy rural environments. These amendments to the Native Vegetation Regulation will undermine their efforts and give an unfair advantage to landowners who are only interested in short term profits, leaving environmental damage for others to deal with. This is socially and economically irresponsible approach to land management.

NSW cannot afford to return to the past when broadscale land clearing resulted in the destruction of millions of hectares of forests and woodland.

Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society supports the existing protections for native vegetation and its dependent wildlife in the Native Vegetation Act 2003. Rather than being weakened by the proposed amendments in the Native Vegetation Regulation they should be strengthened.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Holland (Hon. Secretary)