

From: [REDACTED]
To: [POLICY Conservation & Development Policy Branch Mailbox](#)
Subject: TRIM: Biodiversity Review submission
Date: Thursday, 4 September 2014 6:27:23 PM

I am writing to comment on the Issues Paper drafted by the Biodiversity Review Panel.

Now, more than ever, we must ensure NSW legislation sends a clear message that protection of our remaining biodiversity is of the utmost importance. Our ongoing wealth depends on maintaining the systems which sustain us. As our population increases the pressure on our natural resources increases. If we do not want to lose an even greater number of unique Australian species than those we have already lost we must not only protect our remaining native vegetation but strive to increase its extent, increase the areas of remaining remnants and wherever possible re-connect them.

The UN decade on biodiversity, which began in 2011, recognises the global challenge posed by the dramatic decline in species. NSW is contributing to this trend and the Review into conservation legislation is an opportunity to reverse it.

The Review must set a clear goal to reverse the decline in biodiversity and restore ecosystem function across NSW. Below is an overview of significant issues that must be addressed by the Review.

Existing protections are not enough. A clear message must be sent that the NSW government will not consider a return to the bad old days, that the years of working to ensure protection of native vegetation including thousands of hours of voluntary landcare work have not been in vain. Existing biodiversity and conservation laws, including the Native Vegetation Act 2003 and Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, must be maintained and strengthened. This includes a clear commitment to end broad-scale land clearing across NSW, and a commitment to 'no net loss' of native vegetation.

I support landholders receiving an annual stewardship payment when land is set aside for conservation in recognition of the important role farmers and other landholders play in protecting our environment and biodiversity values for future generations.

The existing framework of conservation legislation has slowed biodiversity loss, but it is not enough to stop species' decline.

Objective decision making must lead to improved environmental outcomes

The principle of "improving or maintaining" environmental outcomes should be retained, and extended so that it applies to all development activities.

Decisions must be based on objective science-based decision making criteria (e.g. Environment Outcomes Assessment Methodology under the NV Act), and discretionary decision making should be very limited.

Biodiversity offsetting must be done well with the understanding that the loss of mature vegetation cannot be immediately replaced with plantings and that on the other hand offsetting existing vegetation with other existing vegetation will result in a net loss. Biodiversity offsetting must be on the basis of like for like and, in addition, include an area of the same size that will be planted using the same species, on the same soils with appropriate and long term maintenance and monitoring.

The purpose of offsetting is to ensure that any development that affects biodiversity leads to an overall improvement for wildlife and species. It is important that rules around biodiversity offsetting reflect this key principle.

Where development is approved that significantly impacts native flora or fauna, the 'like for like' offsetting principle is fundamental and must not be weakened.

Retain the Independent Scientific Committee. This is of the utmost importance and should not be in any way politicised.

The role of the Independent Scientific Committee under the Threatened Species Conservation Act, to decide which species are threatened and deserve special protection, should be retained. Listing of threatened species must continue to be based on the professional advice of the Scientific Committee.

Summary

This review provides a once in a decade opportunity for improving our conservation and biodiversity legislation for posterity. It is absolutely critical that we use this opportunity by taking an evidenced based and scientific approach with a goal towards improving biodiversity across New South Wales. We look to your government to stand firm on this issue.

Yours sincerely,
Annette McKinley