

Dear Biodiversity Review Panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on issues raised by the Biodiversity Review Panel.

I would like to remind Panel members that there is strong consensus globally among scientists that, due to the pressure humanity is placing on our planet, biodiversity is in crisis and we may have entered The Sixth Extinction period.

Our continent is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Those effects will not only make life challenging for humans but for the other life forms that share our ecosystems. I can think of many examples that I have observed on our farm in recent years. For example, where have all the moths and butterflies disappeared to? In recent years we are seeing a huge reduction in lepidoptera species, a phenomenon that must have detrimental effects on the reproduction of grasslands, shrubs and trees, not to mention crops. Honey bees have also reduced in number, especially after the heavy spring frost suffered last October which also killed all the young fruit in our gardens and orchards.

Everything in life is interconnected. Biodiversity losses on the scale being witnessed today affect us all in some way that may not be immediately obvious but which may eventually threaten our survival. Therefore biodiversity protection needs to have **top priority for government funding**. Existing conservation laws such as the Native Vegetation Act 2003 and the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 must be maintained and strengthened. They are not perfect and with regards to Native Veg. I believe there is room for compromise with regards to protection of regrowth. I have experience with regrowth on our farm and while I am completely opposed to clearing/clear-felling in any system, I am of the opinion that judicious and scientifically-evaluated thinning can be ecologically beneficial. Indeed, our Private Native Forestry PVP permits us to thin regrowth forest (mainly monoculture of Eucalyptus mannifera) with the objectives of increasing understorey and improving habitat such as nesting hollows. I think thinning should be permitted after approval, **but it is essential that authorities have the resources to monitor effectively and that means having significant funding increases.**

The same funding challenges restrict National Parks staff from managing NSW parks to their full potential and gives the whole concept of National Parks a very bad name.

Conflict over Native Veg. Act regulation and National Parks management must be addressed robustly and this can only take place if adequate funding and resources are invested in monitoring, evaluation and enforcement.

I am completely opposed to any form of offsetting or 'Bio-Banking', as every ecosystem is unique and irreplaceable. It is time that we put habitat protection (which includes human habitat!) ahead of development. The cumulative impact of human activity has already transformed between one third and one half of the land surface on the planet. It's time to call a halt to new development, time to restrict ourselves to 'brown field' rather than 'green field' development. We can consolidate, retrofit, recycle, share spaces. We can be far more creative and innovative in creating new human settlements and extending agricultural productivity. We simply can no longer afford the tremendous waste of residential and industrial space that occurs when profit is put ahead of planning and design. We are trashing our soils and forests and grasslands at an ever-faster rate.

Human over-exploitation of resources is not restricted to the land; we have dammed most major rivers in the world and used more than half of the world's readily accessible fresh water run-off. As for our oceans, high CO₂ levels in the atmosphere are being absorbed in the sea to create carbonic acid, lowering the pH of oceans and killing marine life, the most noticeable being coral, which faces extinction due to increasing acidification. Such threats to our oceans represent dangerous loss of food sources for a huge proportion of the human population. We are all connected!

A courageous and visionary government would see the writing on the wall and instead of cutting back on environmental safeguards, it would de-prioritise destructive land uses such as mining and related infrastructure, irrigated agriculture and broadscale agriculture in marginal lands. Such steps would go a long way towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity in NSW.

Yours sincerely

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