



As president of the group licensed to rescue sick, injured & orphaned wildlife in Port Stephens, southern Great Lakes & southern Dungog LGA's, I'm alarmed at the prospect that this review might further weaken biodiversity legislation.

Wildlife is suffering in this State to a degree never known before. There are outbreaks of previously unknown diseases in several species; road accidents & deaths are taking an appalling toll on generations of species; survival enhancing genetic diversity is being significantly reduced; & iconic species, such as the Koala, are now extinct in some areas, & are being driven to the brink in others. The most cursory examination of vegetation maps, over even the last ten years, makes the cause very clear: loss of habitat.

The biodiversity legislation now in place is fragile &, because it is inadequately policed, is treated with contempt by some Councils & many developers. A significant number of "ecologists", paid by developers, dance to their piper's tune. When their reports are compared with those of independent parties, the results are farcical; there are examples where the former apparently are even unable to count trees, let alone spot evidence of threatened species of animals & plants. Consent to remove some vegetation is met with wholesale clearing, including that of trees that have been specially marked for conservation. Proffered "offsets" for destroyed vital habitat & wildlife corridors are ludicrous: some offered time & again for different developments; never of equal biodiversity value to that lost; &, even worse, land that has been degraded beyond use by sandmining or contamination by dangerous chemicals.

Orderly, well planned development is important to everyone, but further "streamlining" of biodiversity legislation will only exacerbate the current destructive ad hoc process, to the benefit of nothing but developers.

A strategic approach is needed to what's left of the State's biodiversity; including a proper cost benefit analysis that gives proper weight to the monetary benefit of the environment in terms of human health, safety, lifestyle, & amenity. No-go & go-slow areas could then be delineated, giving more safety & certainty to the community, developers & wildlife alike. Once a proper plan is in place, it needs adequately resourced policing. Rather than the

current lack of consequences for environmental breaches, or petty fines that developers merely factor into their costs, a few well publicised prosecutions would do wonders for the currently failing consciences of developers & Councils.

In summary, we already have legislation that could work well if given a strategic framework & proper policing. Our wildlife is showing why, where & how the legislation is being let down; & could well be used as important indicators of what is needed for improvements that would benefit everyone.

Native animals are, in fact, the canaries down the coal mine for the human species; & they're not doing well.

Lorraine Yudaeff
President

