



Ryde - Hunter's Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society

Member of Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W.

By email to biodiversity.legislationreview@environment.nsw.gov.au

Re Biodiversity Legislation Review

Dear Panel members,

We are a local conservation group which was established in 1966. Our members have spent many hours over many years protecting and enhancing local biodiversity. Our members are very aware that “our” local patches of bushland connect with natural area corridors in catchments and bioregions across NSW and our continent.

It is imperative that all layers of legislation providing for biodiversity and conservation are maintained and strengthened especially those that are related to strategic planning. Strategic planning for improved biodiversity outcomes offers opportunities to recognise catchments, corridors and habitats within a protected legal framework. Strategic planning has been a hallmark of proposed changes to the Planning Act, yet the government has failed to deliver it in any meaningful way in recent legislative reviews.

Current gaps in linkages between legislation must be identified. Triggers to ensure protection of threatened species and endangered ecological communities must be improved. The Scientific Committee must be independent, respected and well resourced by government. The rate at which NSW is losing species is extremely concerning and scientific monitoring is urgently required.

The importance of biodiversity, and the ecosystems upon which human life is dependent, is something taught from primary school yet pragmatic political decisions to reduce so called “red” and “green” tape have become the over-riding mantra of government. The logic of this mantra/rhetoric is unclear except as short term political expediency and as an ideological bias that represents an assault on the environment to meet developer and mining demands to the detriment of other imperatives.

Our local community has seen recent increases in flying foxes, sacred ibises and night predator bird numbers visiting local bushland reserves. Broad scale land clearing has been a major contributing factor to these fauna moving into our local urban bushland. There should be no net loss of native vegetation based on both its diversity and value.

Land cleared across the agricultural areas of NSW has been more than enough to meet the need for food and fibre both for Australians and export. Historically, excessive clearing and herding of large numbers of hard hoofed stock have caused significant land and catchment degradation and soil loss. It has been expensive to repair and has left large tracts of land unproductive. Any remaining patches of remnant native vegetation are required to be preserved and, where possible, strategic approaches applied to ensure habitat connectivity and the ongoing viability of isolated remnants. The travelling stock route network has a vital role to play in the necessary development of an overarching biodiversity strategy for NSW.

The Society has been very disappointed to see a “watering down” of meaningful targets in State Plans since the election of the O’Farrell/Baird Government. The disappearance of science-based decision making criteria seems to be deliberate and represents a limited understanding of the critical importance of biodiversity for future generations.

Politicising biodiversity will not deliver the necessary clean air and water on which we depend. It is a short-sighted approach and ignores both the scientific basis to our understanding of the need for biodiversity and healthy ecosystems to support human existence and the community concern over many years to see this science reflected in strong and meaningful legislation to protect and conserve biodiversity.

We urge you to resist all calls to weaken or even abandon the biodiversity conservation legislation for this state. We cannot afford to lose any more of our precious irreplaceable environmental heritage for perceived short-term gain.

Yours sincerely,

Cathy Merchant,
President, RHHFFPS

5 September 2014