

Thanks you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

My comments are not so much about the legislation itself but about the attitudes we have to maintaining out native vegetation and the animals that depend on it.

We all know Australia has the best range of breathtaking scenery, magnificent birds, adorable furry creatures, stunning native wildflowers, spectacular rainforests, beautiful beaches, ... in the world. We all love it and tourists come here in huge numbers every year.

A major reason we have this abundance of natural resources is that the country is relatively 'undeveloped' compared to other parts of the world. And a big issue in how we manage our native vegetation and animals (who depend on it) is how we see this resource as a community or nation.

Australia needs to promote itself, both internally and externally, more as the most spectacular destination for the world's tourists than a sure return for the investment dollars of mining giants. Not suggesting we need to close any mines, just promote ourselves better.

We also need to promote at a local level how positive our local native vegetation is for the whole community and not just see it as a burden or problem standing in the way of individual, and sometimes short term, financial benefits.

Over the past 20 or so years various governments have changed our attitudes to several of the 'bad habits' we had developed as a community. Now we all know that smoking is not a positive for our health. That driving too fast, after drinking, or while phoning are pretty stupid things to do. And that violence, sexual harassment and racial aggression can have significant negative consequences for many people.

Land clearing, overgrazing and inappropriate developments are often just as much, maybe more, of a problem for local communities as the 'bad habits' above.

We need to do a positive campaign for our native vegetation, birds and animals to promote the high values that these have to our society so that as a community, or nation, we all value these things more. This will have a positive effect on landowners and developers who will, because of greater awareness, value native vegetation more and will make more efforts to minimize destruction and improve positive outcomes for the environment.

We do currently have plenty of supporters for the environment but this area often becomes a battleground of 'us and them'. By changing community attitudes we should pacify the extremes of both sides and achieve better outcomes.

We need to be able to put a value (per annum) on our native environments. Perhaps we can do this by adding up how much land we have in National Parks, local parks and reserves, conversation areas, etc. then dividing by how much we are willing to spend on maintaining those (Federal, State and Local Govt plus private), and how much we gain from tourists who spend time in those areas. We also spend considerable sums on private gardens and pets, although hard to use this info would show how much we care in dollar terms about our localised environments.

Currently we have Negative Conservation system where landowners etc are punished for

reducing areas of native vegetation.

We need to introduce a Positive Conservation system where landowners are encouraged to increase areas of native vegetation. This would be in the form of tax deductions or similar for protecting, that is fencing off and replanting, native vegetation especially along waterways and other sensitive areas. Claims could be checked randomly on aerial photos. Returning money to the farming sector in this way would be a very positive investment. Hopefully this would reclaim more areas of native vegetation to balance what is being lost every year.

Good luck



As a disclosure I currently own over 500 acres of protected fenced off native vegetation.