

Cristina Ricci



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Dear Panel

Submission to Independent Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel

Even though brief, I would like to outline my reasons for the urgent need to strengthen provisions in current laws, policies and regulatory frameworks to protect biodiversity in NSW.

I make the following points after having read the Issues Paper (August 2014).

1. Direct government action (for example, establishment of a reserve system and strong regulatory controls with appropriate enforcement provisions) is essential.
2. Active threatened species management is essential.
3. Native vegetation planning at a state, regional and property scale is essential.
4. There should be an aspirational goal for biodiversity conservation and this should be in accordance with the high level goals as outlined in the International Convention on Biodiversity.
5. Improving “efficiency” may not be directly compatible with the best possible biodiversity outcomes.
6. Biobanking and offsets programs are of dubious benefit to biodiversity conservation, are largely inefficient and should be discontinued.
7. Broad scale biodiversity monitoring is essential for evidence based management and should be mandated and properly resourced.
8. Red tape is an emotive term (often derogatory) used to describe “excessive” or unnecessary administrative processes. Unfortunately best practice biodiversity conservation is a complex process, requiring careful assessment of evidence. This is all too easily characterised as “red tape” when it is necessary and essential to adequately protect biodiversity.
9. Given the decline in biodiversity in NSW, current extinction crisis and compounding and accumulating impacts (such as climate change), greater controls, not less, should be imposed on high impact processes, including agricultural land uses, building developments, potential pollution sources and mining operations.
10. Increased competition for declining freshwater resources, impacts from extractive water uses (especially irrigated agriculture) and introduced species mean aquatic biodiversity is particularly at risk (for example, the Macquarie Marshes and the Lowbidgee wetlands). More stringent regulation and better protective measures are urgently required to prevent ecosystem collapse. Examples of such measures include: buy-back of water licenses and a comprehensive system of protected rivers and wetlands put in place.

11. Inappropriate agricultural practices have resulted in broad scale over clearing, soil erosion and spread of invasive species. Removing or weakening limits and controls will further exacerbate serious threats to biodiversity.
12. Any changes to current biodiversity protection regulations and laws must fully consider the cumulative and/or interactive effect of multiple impacts currently occurring, including the likely impacts of climate change.
13. The conservation and management of NSW's biodiversity requires the employment of people with appropriate expertise and experience. Resources should be directed to ensure biodiversity conservation goals are met and appropriate laws, policies and regulations exist as necessary.

Yours sincerely

Cristina Ricci