

SUBMISSION NATIVE VEGETATION BIODIVERSITY REVIEW

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We personally are living in the middle of a biodiverse landscape with an aspiration to retain and improve but we must also be practical. If the two are combined, as has been the case for many years on our 80ha farming property, everyone benefits.

Coastal Northern NSW farms traditionally are not large but, well managed, are historically very productive. Growing bananas, running beef cattle, selling vealers and stores and, in conjunction with these commercial activities SELECTIVE logging has allowed us to smooth out the ups and downs of cattle & banana prices. Under our ownership selective timber harvesting has been carried out three times in the last fifty years. These activities took place most recently in the early 1980s and again eight years ago when 50 truck loads of timber were forwarded to Grafton creating employment for a medium sized mill. Facilitating the short rotations are good soil, good moisture, warm climate and our invasive weed management. We also manage for wildlife, never touching the tallwoods or the old growth hollow bearing trees and, until recently, continuing to add to the over 1000 fleshy fruited rainforest species planted for the (usually forgotten) frugivores.

Logging activities & management have allowed for a mixed age vegetation with neither germination nor growth inhibited from invasive weeds. Our native vegetation, blackbutts, flooded gums and brushbox, is a core asset – a sustainable, renewable crop. Removing camphor laurels, lantana, blackberries, privet to provide optimal growing conditions for timber also provides high value habitat. Also at risk if logging is no longer able to be undertaken is regular baiting and maintaining a no dog/cat policy.

With an ideological desire to preserve all trees, perceived to be emanating from urban areas, there is also a dogged mindset about logging. There is no understanding that the majority of farmers do have an affinity with and treat wildlife as their friend, not their enemy. Not legislation, not enforcement. There is also widespread rural support for Landcare. I believe there is plenty of evidence of tree planting for lambing ewes on previously cleared land, increased planting of riparian zones and designated/planned corridors and not selling off TSR's indicate an understanding & mitigation that humans and nature clash. **It must not be forgotten that another Government at another time enforced land clearing and land would often be seized if this rule was not adhered to and**

every parcel of land laid bare. Evidence remains today of still standing huge ringbarked dead trees on this property. This flawed policy was strongly enforced at that time.

Is the proposal the best means of achieving the objectives or intended outcomes or is there a better way?

With the conflict that has arisen and will continue to arise, will worthwhile balanced results ever be obtained. In our particular case, logging and care/maintenance produces an economic benefit that has enabled biodiversity to flourish. Under the existing policy there is more potential benefit in having no wildlife. State Forests have planted thousands of acres of pines – no wildlife there but harvesting certainty.

Certainty of anticipated future income is integral in OVERALL farm decision making in our case.

Nature regenerates – more than adequately has held its own. Land previously cleared for banana plantations elsewhere locally & devoid of any native vegetation previously provided a good income but now those not taken over by blueberry growers are neglected and returning to bush. Continual fight to keep nature under control has led to the “any tree born after 1994 can be killed” policy. Will this be like the one child China policy, huge percentage of males in twenty years (social problems) and with trees, only older ones – no lush younger foliage/pick & blossoms/sap (koala browse, sugar gliders & bats)

Compensatory planting has merit. Allows a better utilisation of property.

Offsets have merit. If a farm is to be economically viable and where an additional block created/house built and rented out, this should be considered where practical as a measure in providing habitat retention/protection and some compensation for disadvantage.

Discontent.

This area has many National Parks and Reserves and yet many conflicts are still arising on private lands.

Native vegetation along boundary fencelines needs to be addressed by an unbiased central authority. Pic attached illustrating, again personal experience, that this unsafe tree cannot be removed as the boundary is shared with a Government Department. Laws like this will cause conflict and that is why all trees in schoolyards were recently cleared. Note the branches hung up and dangerous & yet to fall on fences. Note boundary peg at base of trunk. 50% of tree within our property, 50% of tree on Crown land. Common sense and practical approach by Bureaucracy very lacking. The tree is owned by Crown

Lands when it suits them. When it or others elsewhere as is the case falls into our property blocking our fire trails, then it isn't theirs but becomes our responsibility. "Illegal" tree removal in this instance comes under **Lands Department Compliance**, not **OEH**, not **Council**. Unnecessary multitude of regulating/enforcing agencies.

Understanding the myriad of laws is not always easy and it is unclear in many instances of transgression who is the over-riding agency. We are aware of a (local) instance where a large quarry operating next to a farming property is using the farm native vegetation as the quarries' buffer. **OEH** appear to have no objection to tree removal by the farmer, however, **Council** in this instance are prosecuting!

Penalties for transgression appear to be out of proportion.

I am unsure in other Shires the policy, however, this Council now has a blanket, lock up all habitat policy on land not zoned urban. The Koala Plan of Management is another regulation mixed in with other regulations which is also confusing. No evidence any koalas protected. So much money spent on the Plan which could have been put to better use in purchasing core koala habitat.

Biobanking impractical in conservation terms, allowing big business/land developers/others an eased conscience. Both biobanking and Conservation agreements are noted on Title which would deter a lot of buyers and diminish value & have a complicated Trust set up and with long term uncertainty for protection. Possibly unrepresentative of land to be replaced – impossible to get an area of similar characteristics.

Do you look after bush for 20 years and find there is no return because a new Local Government with new ideas is in. Should a change in State Government affect whether income producing land is locked up – "sovereign risk".

When one moment there is a productive balanced farm and in the next moment, half of it is taken away and locked up, in effect stolen, it is very unfair and compensation should become an issue.

Biodiversity will not be protected through threats and intimidation and where there is no incentive.

If there is a community benefit then the community will need to provide funding or a buyout and with every Government Department cash strapped, how practical is compensation. Note the outcry to have a modest \$7.00 medical co-payment. Just terms and wetlands issues 20 years ago appeared a long time in resolving, if it ever was.

With regard to the triple bottom line, the Australian native forest timber industry (PNF) is sustainable, overall done selectively (not clear felling) does not damage biodiversity, provides an ongoing income stream and, after the first cut which usually occurred many years prior, is carbon positive and deserves to be supported.

Tree clearing bans aren't just an issue for farmers. The precedent affects everyone. We are talking about people who bought land on the understanding they would own the land and everything situated upon the land including vegetation and water. Placing private vegetation under State/Local Government control is a direct takeover of private property. Without consent, without just compensation it is plain theft. If it can be done with trees it can be done with absolutely anything.

Show how valuable farmers are to the Australian community because, like the wildlife displaced by housing development and newly constructed arterial roads, those risking working on the land will be fewer and fewer. Removing long term uncertainty should be a priority and the inflexibility in the present system removed. We need to be able to plan ahead. Land cannot just be taken and owners told what to do with it not in this country not yet!

