

## **BIODIVERSITY LEGISLATION REVIEW SUBMISSION**

**By the Inner West Environment Group (IWEG)**



We are a landcare group made up of volunteers in the inner west of Sydney. We have worked for 20 years to provide a wildlife corridor along what is now the light rail corridor. We know at first hand the destructive effects of weeds and feral animals. Underpinning the hundreds of volunteer hours we have put in is the recognition of the importance of linking habitat to provide a corridor for wildlife to move along for food and shelter. In our small patch, we observe that isolated pockets of habitat may not support wildlife.

### **The Problem – the loss of species continues**

In spite of the legislation under review, species are still being lost in NSW, and the populations of many birds and other animals have crashed in recent years. This is our heritage being lost. Our understanding is that the main contributing factor is land clearing, both past and continuing. Over 1,000 species and populations of plants and animals are currently threatened with extinction. Land clearing harms biodiversity by directly destroying native plants and animals and causing the loss of habitat and food sources. It also isolates and fragments remaining habitat, promoting weed and pest animal invasion. There should be a commitment to 'no net loss' of native vegetation; protection of regrowth vegetation; improved enforcement and extension services for protecting native vegetation; mandatory recovery plans for threatened biodiversity, extending and safeguarding protected areas such as national parks; and increased efforts to combat weeds and pest animal species.

The principles of ecologically sustainable development which underpin the existing legislation should be maintained. There must be a clear legislative commitment to maintain or improve environmental outcomes as the key test of land clearing proposals. All development (including mining, forestry, urban development and agriculture) should have to improve or maintain environmental outcomes.

Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs) should be restricted to genuinely low impact activities, and cumulative impact must be a key consideration in assessing clearing and development proposals. Controlling woody weeds should be science based.

The Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 has played an important role in identifying, monitoring and working to counter the threats to biodiversity and important habitat. These two acts need to work together.

The control of invasive species and feral animals needs to be adequately funded to ensure areas of diversity are protected

Wildlife corridors need to be protected or established between habitat areas in both urban and rural settings to protect against extinction of isolated animal or bird populations in fires.

It is essential to protect riparian vegetation systems and wetlands that provide water supplies and support so much important habitat and animals.

Decisions must be based on objective science-based decision making criteria (e.g. Environment Outcomes Assessment Methodology under the NV Act), and discretionary decision making should be very limited.

Where development is approved that significantly impacts native flora or fauna, the 'like for like' offsetting principle is fundamental and must not be weakened.

The role of the Independent Scientific Committee under the TSC Act should be retained and listing must continue to be based on the professional advice of the Scientific Committee.

The government should ensure land clearing legislation is enforced. Don't let law breakers get away with flouting the law.

Farmers should be encouraged to preserve native vegetation and animals especially on marginal land, including controlling weeds and feral animals, and consideration should be given to adequately funding them to do so.

Reducing red tape may help frustrated farmers but should not be used to implement poor policy. The legislation should be genuinely "conservative": we know many farmers do a wonderful job of looking after the land, but we need to focus on the big picture, of what we are losing.

National Parks should be fully protected, not opened up for commercial use, and fully funded to control feral animals via science based programs. To augment their effectiveness, they should be funded to conserve or re-establish small mammals by providing feral proof fences.