

As a life-time resident (more than 65 years) of NSW I am concerned that current governments are failing in their duty to protect and conserve much of the State's natural environment. Living in a region which has seen pastoral development, in particular, from the very earliest days of NSW's history, I am very aware of the impact that settlement has had on our flora, fauna and previously diverse habitats.

This submission is made in the hope that existing biodiversity and conservation legislation, including the provisions of the *Native Vegetation Act (2003)* and the *Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995)*, now under review, will not only be maintained but strengthened.

Over the past two centuries, the natural diversity of New South Wales has been severely diminished by human activities, including land clearing, urban development, exploitation of natural resources and introduction of invasive species. Since the major biodiversity losses following European settlement are still ongoing, we need an overarching objective to protect and conserve biodiversity.

The principles of **ecologically sustainable** development must be cemented in a clear legislative commitment to maintain or improve environmental outcomes as the key test of clearing proposals. The NSW government should commit to an end to broad-scale land clearing across NSW, and to **no net loss of native vegetation** reflecting its diversity and value. Where development is approved that significantly impacts native flora or fauna, the 'like for like' offsetting principle is fundamental and should clearly be strengthened.

In many cases the impacts of clearing are felt far beyond the property in question. Significant amounts of public money are presently being spent remedying the damage past clearing has caused. Such remediation would be even more costly to the public purse if not for the hours of volunteer efforts from community groups and will only increase if legislation is weakened.

The *Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995)* has played an important role in identifying, increasing scrutiny of and seeking to ameliorate the threats that target biodiversity and important habitat. Offsetting has proved to be unsatisfactory as it still results in a net loss of threatened species habitat. There must be strengthened protection for native vegetation and threatened species habitat under the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act (1979)* to ensure no net loss of native vegetation from urban, industrial and mining development. 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 conservation of nature must remain as the primary focus of protected areas. Commercial and recreational activities that compromise conservation values should be excluded from protected areas.

With grandchildren who will be part of the future of NSW, I would hope that this government will seek to administer laws that ensure the State's natural heritage is not further diminished, but will at least be maintained, or preferably be increased in value. A diverse, and thus healthy, environment is vital to all our futures, and in the modern world can only be guaranteed by appropriate legislation.

Yours sincerely,  
Jenny Medd

