

Restoring nature and enhancing value for landholders

Summary of submissions

1 Background

This document provides a summary of public submissions to the Commission's review of options to further [protect and restore biodiversity](#) and ecosystem functions in regional landscapes and enhance value and support for landholders.

The summary includes:

- an overview of submission types by stakeholder groups and locations ([Section 2](#))
- a summary of key themes and suggested actions ([Section 3](#)).

2 Overview of submissions

The Commission called for public submissions via the [Have Your Say](#) website between 14 March and 27 April 2025. The Have Your Say consultation provided an opportunity for stakeholders to provide comments including on the [terms-of-reference](#) for the review via an online survey, email or postal submission. Note: email and postal submissions were extended on request up to 9 May 2025.

Questions included:

1. What do you consider is the most significant action(s) NSW can undertake to protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystem function on private lands?
2. How can NSW government and landholders further improve soil, water and vegetation management to protect and restore biodiversity while delivering sustainable economic benefits?
3. What do you consider is the most effective way to further support and enable landholders to deliver sustainable land management and production outcomes?
4. Is there any other information about this topic you would like to share with us?

A total of **91 submissions** were received:

- Online survey N=55
- Email N=36

Most (>70 percent) of the submissions were received from private land managers and NGO/community and environmental groups (see [Figure 1](#)) and represented statewide NSW interests, with specific regional focus in the North Coast, Central West, and South East (Table 2).

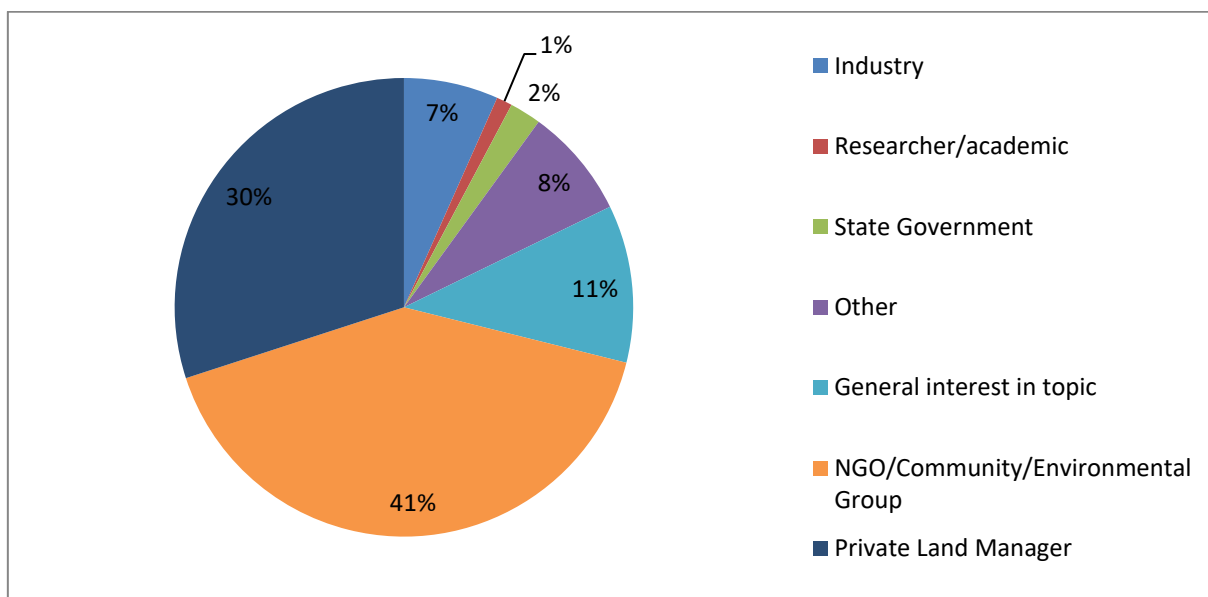


Figure 1: Proportion of submissions by stakeholder type

Note 1: Several individuals submitted responses to more than one category type. The project team has chosen the most applicable primary category.

Note 2: Some individuals have made a submission but indicated that they also work for a government agency or university. These individuals made a submission on their own behalf and not on behalf of their employer.

Table 1: Submission by LLS regions (as indicated by stakeholders)

Regions	Number	Percent (%)
Statewide NSW	32	35%
North Coast	14	15%
Central West	12	13%
South East	8	9%
Central Tablelands	4	4%
Hunter	4	4%
Greater Sydney	4	4%
None of the above (I have a general interest in the topic)	4	4%
Other (please specify)	4	4%
Riverina	3	3%
Western	2	2%

Note: The percentages are based on the total number of regions selected as part of the survey or the email submissions, not the total number of submissions received, as some submitters have an interest in a range of regions. For those submissions that did not indicate a region of interest, these have been placed into the general interest/other category.

3 Summary

The paper provides a summary of submissions by key themes and suggested actions, by stakeholder groups where possible. Quotations are included to illustrate key points from submissions.

3.1 Key themes

1. **There is widespread concern across stakeholder groups about key aspects of the legislation, Code and government processes**

- Many respondents expressed frustration that existing legislation is not being properly implemented. They call for:
 - Immediate operationalisation of tools like the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map and other mapping to better identify priority conservation areas and improve regulatory accuracy.
 - Stronger regulation and approval processes, including clearer communication and enforcement of laws.
 - Alignment between state and federal vegetation and biodiversity protections.
 - Better coordination across government agencies to avoid siloed legislation and program efforts.
 - Better monitoring and reporting of native vegetation.
- Many submissions argue that the current Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018 enables excessive land clearing and criticised the current self-assessment provisions. They call for:
 - Repeal or significant reform of the Code.
 - Updated definitions of regrowth vegetation (e.g., changing the 1990 baseline).
 - Improved government oversight and transparent approval processes.

2. **There is a need for more informed and targeted incentives and well-resourced education for landholders on land management**

There is widespread support for:

- Providing economic incentives (e.g. rates relief, direct grants/payments, tax breaks) for landholders to conserve biodiversity.
- Increased funding and staffing for the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) and Local Land Services (LLS) to further support landholders in sustainable land management activities.
- Developing education and support programs to increase understanding among landholders of complicated land management and biodiversity legislation/regulation and build awareness of the range of benefits from conservation.
- Increasing targeted and genuine engagement efforts with landholders to better inform legislation and policy and build trust with government.

3. **Vegetation mapping is generally viewed as a critical tool to enabling the legislation however there are serious concerns about awareness and accuracy**

- Several landholders, particularly from West Wyalong and the Monaro region, express frustration with:
 - Inaccurate or outdated vegetation maps.

- Being penalised for sustainable practices like eucalyptus and broombush harvesting.
 - Lack of consultation and compensation when land is reclassified as sensitive or regulated.
 - There is a general lack of widespread awareness of the map, rules and supporting resources.
 - Education and awareness-raising on the map and rules needs to be increased and simplified (e.g. one-stop shop).
 - There is a significant lack of trust in the current map and government processes (inc. ground-truthing) to support it.
- 4. There is a need for better acknowledgement and inclusion of cultural values and knowledge in conservation planning and decision making**

Some submissions advocate for:

- Greater involvement of First Nations communities in conservation planning.
- Support for Indigenous Protected Areas and Ranger Programs.
- Recognition of cultural and local knowledge in mapping and management decisions.

Several responses emphasise:

- The importance of First Nations leadership and cultural fire practices.
- The need for ecological literacy and valuing native vegetation as an asset rather than a liability.

5. There is interest and support from key stakeholders on integrating broader issues including international targets and commitments, climate change, catchment management, ecosystem resilience, cumulative impacts

- Academic and scientific contributors highlighted:
 - The urgency of adapting land management to climate-driven risks like dieback, drought, and invasive species.
 - The need for trialling climate-adapted restoration strategies and securing seed banks.
- Other submissions emphasise the need for whole-of-catchment and landscape-scale planning and the importance of integrating cumulative impacts (inc. of clearing specifically). Linkages with relevant international targets and commitments was seen as critical to ensuring coordinated outcomes.

3.2 Key themes by stakeholder groups

Conservation groups

- **Repeal or reform of the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018:** Strong opposition to self-assessed clearing and calls for independent oversight and transparent approval processes.
- **Expansion of protected areas:** Using CAR (Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative) principles and landscape-scale planning.
- **Increased funding for conservation:** Especially for the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) and stewardship payments.
- **Improved mapping and monitoring:** Emphasis on accuracy, transparency, and ground-truthing.

- **Climate and biodiversity integration:** Advocating for nature-based solutions and climate resilience as underlying approaches to integrate in land management.
- **Recognition of Indigenous values and knowledge:** Support for Aboriginal-led conservation and ranger programs and involvement in decision-making.

Landholders and individuals

- **Mapping accuracy and fairness:** Concerns about inaccuracies and misclassification, particularly its impact on financial viability of productive activities, land values and sustainable active land management practices.
- **Compensation and incentives:** Requests for targeted compensation, stewardship payments, tax relief, and other supports for landholders to protect and restore land and expand sustainable land management practices.
- **Weed and pest control:** Frustration with the impacts of land management rules on the ability to manage weeds and pests, and the lack of coordination with biosecurity needs, requirements and enforcement.
- **Consultation and engagement:** Strong support for more transparent and inclusive Government decision-making and policy through consultation and genuine engagement with landholders to build more trust and enable effective implementation in local settings.
- **Support for voluntary conservation:** Some willingness to participate in conservation programs and practices if voluntary and adequately supported and protected.

Industry representatives

- **Support for sustainable, active land management:** Emphasis on the importance of baseline data, long-term monitoring, and incentives to effectively monitor and report on the range of outcomes and benefits from sustainable land management.
- **Alignment with biosecurity laws:** Express the need for coordination and consistency with biosecurity requirements and across jurisdictions.
- **Recognition of landholder contributions:** Advocate for policies that reward conservation efforts of landholders in meaningful ways that directly address any impacts of regulation and reward sustainable land management efforts.

Government or affiliated

- **Leadership and coordination:** Calls for stronger government coordination and direction in biodiversity, biosecurity and land use policy.
- **Cultural integration:** Promotion of Aboriginal-led enterprises and sustainable and active land management.
- **Landscape scales, ecosystems and climate change:** Calls for better integration of climate change and broader landscape scales into land management policy and programs.

3.3 Suggested actions by stakeholder groups

Private landowners:

- Provide financial incentives for conservation (e.g., tax breaks, grants).
- Recognise the costs of conservation and reward good land stewardship.
- Improve education and outreach on sustainable land management practices.
- Support weed and pest control efforts with coordinated policy, funding and resources.

NGOs /Community /Environmental groups:

- Strengthen environmental regulations and enforcement including amendments to legislation and the Code (e.g. reform of self-assessment land clearing provisions).
- Increase funding and staffing for the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) and Local Land Services (LLS).
- Promote regenerative agriculture and cultural fire practices.
- Improve mapping and monitoring of biodiversity values, including through ground-truthing.
- Improve government oversight and transparency of land management and approval processes.

Government agencies:

- Focus on capacity building among landholders through improved and well-resourced extension services and training.
- Support landholders with technical advice and funding for practices promoting sustainable land management (e.g. revegetation, protective fencing).
- Promote natural capital accounting and biodiversity audits.
- Encourage collaboration between agencies and between agencies and landholders.

General public (including academics, researchers, concerned citizens):

- End self-assessment for land clearing and introduce government oversight and transparency of approval processes.
- Protect both young and mature regrowth forests.
- Improve public education on biodiversity and ecosystem services including its benefits.
- Better align state and federal biodiversity laws and regulations.
- Use climate-adaptive strategies and support research-based interventions.

Other common suggestions include:

- Revising the definition of regrowth to reflect ecological maturity.
- Creating a one-stop platform for landholders to access biodiversity information and regulatory maps.
- Promoting nature-based solutions and climate resilience through conservation.