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Page 1

Q1

First name

[REDACTED]

Q2

Last name

[REDACTED]

Q3

Email

[REDACTED]

Q4

Yes

Can we contact you about your submission (if needed)?

Q5

Yes

Can we add your email to our mailing list for occasional updates on this topic?

Q6

I am representing an NGO or community group.

What best describes you?

Q7

Statewide NSW

What best describes your main regional interest?

Q8

Your submission may be published. If you do not want your personal details or responses published, please tell us here.

I agree to have my submission published anonymously
– please remove my name before publishing.

Q9

What do you consider is the most significant action(s) we can undertake to protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystem function on private lands?

The NSW Government must remove code-base land clearing allowances under the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018, that are empowered by the Local Land Services Act 2013. These laws rely on land-owners self-assessing whether they can clear their land or not, which is enabling careless and rampant land clearing. Since these laws came into force in 2017, land clearing rates on private property have tripled. Over the past five years an average of 84,000 hectares of bush have been cleared on private properties. This is an unsustainable and unacceptable level of clearing. Instead, the NSW Government need to introduce a clear and meaningful approval pathway that can successfully and urgently protect habitat and reduce land clearing. The approval system needs to have Government oversight and transparent reporting.

Under current rules in NSW, land cleared before 1990 is exempt from regulation. This is outdated, damaging and needs to be repealed. Such lands may now contain native regrowth nearly 35 years old. New research has shown regrown forests and woodlands can provide valuable habitat and food for threatened species after an average of 15 years. For example, some species like the koala use regrowth as young as nine years old. I note some species, like greater gliders need much older mature forests so it is critical to have policies that retain both young and old forests.

Q10

How can we further improve soil, water and vegetation management to protect and restore biodiversity while delivering sustainable economic outcomes?

Govt needs to actively work to shift the culture so that landowners value native vegetation on their land are incentivised to protect it rather than destroy it. First and foremost, we need a strong regulatory system that encourages landholders to protect native vegetation. This system, needs to be supported by a clear and effective education and engagement campaign, so that landowners are aware of the laws, how to follow them. It should communicate the benefits to people, economies, biodiversity and importantly the benefits to the landowners through the ongoing fruitfulness of the land. The regulatory system should be bolstered by economic incentives to landowners. In NSW, over 300,000 hectares of habitat is currently protected forever by voluntary conservation agreements. This program is delivered by the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT). Funding and staffing for the BCT should be increased, to scale-up the number of private properties entering conservation agreements. We also need to revisit how we protect regrowth vegetation. Protecting native regrowth is more cost-effective and efficient than new planting programs.

Q11

What do you consider is the most effective way to further support and enable landholders to deliver sustainable land management and production outcomes?

Reforms must be accompanied by a clear communications and engagement plan. Previous research undertaken by the Local Land Services revealed that a majority of landholders DO NOT know about the rules and resources available. There needs to be an easy to navigate, one- stop platform that landholders can use to make decisions, including a finalised and enforceable native vegetation regulatory map so that people understand what biodiversity values are on their land.

There should also be increases in penalties for non compliance that relate to land value and are at a level that disincentives land clearing. This should also be prominent in all communications.

More permanent staff should be employed within the Biodiversity Conservation Trust and Local Land Services. Increased staffing is necessary to roll-out and scale-up effective conservation initiatives with landholders.

Q12

Is there any other information about this topic you would like to share with us?

The NSW Government must action these changes immediately and ensure that changes are implemented this year. A slow rollout could encourage more clearing before new regulations take effect. This would have a devastating impact on our biodiversity, which has been reduced to around half of the native habitat that existed before colonisation.

Nature in NSW is suffering, from private clearing and also the ongoing shameful destruction of native forests by this Government. Native forest logging must also end. Protecting what is left on both public and private land is critical for biodiversity, human health, climate resilience, the economy of NSW & the benefit of future generations.
