

Seán Burke
PO Box 2105
CENTRAL TILBA NSW 2546
Mob: 0411 779 571

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Native Vegetation Regulation Review
Conservation Policy and Strategy Section
Office of Environment and Heritage
Level 12, PO Box A290

SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1232

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please accept my submission to the Native Vegetation Regulation Review supporting the environmental protection provisions of the Native Vegetation Act 2003 (The Act) and asking that those requirements be strengthened by assiduous application of the precautionary principle within the regulations.

I live at the southern end of Eurobodalla Shire in the south-east of NSW and have been involved in environmental protection down this way since the early 1980s. One of the key issues we are currently facing is protection and restoration of koala habitat for the 30-50 members of a remnant group of koalas that range from west of Bodalla down to the Bega Valley. This group of koalas has only just managed to survive as an ancient genotype nearing extinction as the result of inappropriate land management on both public and private land over the past 100 years.

With land clearing identified as the most significant threat to native vegetation and wildlife in NSW including numerous threatened species and the quality of our water, it is essential that these regulations that support The Act are strengthened to ensure that we hand on to our children and their children a country that is ecologically sustainable without the rash of unnecessary extinction of species that we are currently experiencing. The government must uphold strong native vegetation laws so that we don't return to the unsustainable practices of the past where millions of hectares of endangered ecological communities, threatened species habitat and wetlands were bulldozed and burned.

I find it quite unbelievable that the New South Wales Government is proposing such major changes to our native vegetation laws that will allow for unacceptable increases in land clearing. My most serious concern is the proposal to remove certain clearing of land from the requirement for approval by the local Catchment Management Authorities. These authorities are familiar with local conditions and provide a safety net in ensuring that destructive practices are not permitted. The introduction of the Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs) as proposed without the need for approvals is asking for trouble and

could unfortunately take us back to the days of wanton destruction of critical habitat and place environments, properties and lives in danger in the case of Ecological Burning under proposed Clearing for environmental works RAMA.

It is also essential that Private Native Forestry provisions are not weakened as proposed, especially at this critical time when the impacts of anthropogenic climate change are still being assessed and the framework for carbon trading on carbon sequestered by the protection of native forests from harvesting hasn't even yet been defined. This may encourage landowners to reap short-term rewards from harvesting native forest timbers on their property when more lucrative outcomes for the landowner and more sustainable environmental, social and economic outcomes for the community may be possible.

Please ensure that these proposed changes to regulations are modified so that the protective mechanisms of The Act and current regulations are strengthened rather than weakened and the precautionary principle is put into practice in this critical area of government management.

Yours sincerely,

Seán Burke