

## **Solution to the Environmental Crisis of Excessive Clearing of Native Vegetation in NSW**

How to quickly enhance the economic value to farmers of the retention and regeneration of native vegetation? - surely this is the *critical pathway* question that needs to be articulated as the front and centre issue.

A pragmatic answer to this question will most quickly address the conjoined problems of biodiversity losses and climate change-exacerbated, increased land surface temperature that are associated with the accelerated rates of clearing of native vegetation in NSW.

Moreover, speed is of the essence if NSW is to adhere to the national policy of protecting 30% of biodiversity by 2030. Such a policy ambition is currently hobbled by;

- i) the introduction in 2016 of new, far weaker vegetation clearing laws by the NSW Government which has seen land clearance increase 13-fold, from an annual average rate of 2,703 ha per year under the old laws to an astonishing 37,754 ha under the new laws,
- ii) The current law's self-assessable codes and biodiversity offsets of questioned integrity, which have facilitated this massive increase in large-scale clearing of vital habitats.
- iii) the Discussion Paper released as part of the review of land clearing laws which lacks any serious consideration of the disastrous impacts of vegetation loss on biodiversity.

To protect 30% of biodiversity by 2030 will require c. 20% of areas in NSW, other than currently protected areas (10%), to be governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for their in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services, including the mitigation of increased temperatures.

### *Pricing carbon for carbon farming*

Putting a price on carbon would provide a market signal to private landholders that would encourage the retention and regeneration of native vegetation in the near and longer-term. Many parts of NSW would require only a moderate carbon price to make the restoration and conservation of native vegetation a profitable business enterprise. This approach would also need long-term policy certainty and a consistent message from federal and state governments to be feasible.

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