

## **Discussion Paper / Statutory Review of Part 5A Local Land Services Act**

I write on behalf of members of the Far South Coast Branch of the National Parks Association (NPA), which encompasses the Monaro, Bega Valley and coastal belt down to the Victorian border. We value our regional ecosystems and the biodiversity they contain.

The weakening of native vegetation protections embodied in the 2016 Biodiversity Conservation Act has resulted in a dramatic increase in the area of NSW being cleared under an inadequate regime of approvals, monitoring and intervention. It is clear that the processes we now have in place have greatly facilitated the clearing of native vegetation.

The 2021 NSW *State of the Environment Report* points to a continuing rise in the number of species at risk of extinction and observes that clearing of “native woody vegetation” in NSW has tripled since 2015.

If meaningful protections for biodiversity are to be implemented, then the current system of native vegetation management across NSW requires root and branch reform rather than just procedural tinkering.

The community is receiving mixed messages from government. The stated policy priorities of rapidly reducing carbon emissions and of arresting biodiversity decline (most notably by doubling koala numbers in NSW by 2050) are hardly consistent with policies facilitating increased land clearing. There is simply no integration of these contradictory agendas in to what would constitute coherent policy.

Within this 5 year review period, the most profound experience for our members were the catastrophic bushfires of 2019/20. For those of us who live

on rural properties and spent weeks in RFS fire trucks it was a lived experience in which the scale of the fires and their environmental consequences were beyond imagining.

Fires have always been part of our landscape, but parameters are changing. The CSIRO is predicting, that with climate change, so called mega fires are likely to occur every decade or so rather than twice a century. The implications for land management are obvious and planning regimes need to be flexible and adaptable.

Why are discussions on such issues notably absent from government discussion papers?

Is there any work being done on the cumulative environmental impacts of native vegetation clearing and disturbance and the degree to which the fires have altered the environmental balance?

Is the precautionary principle discussed in the planning process?

A long running issue in the forests of the eastern Monaro has been native forest logging on private land regulated by Private Native Forestry (PNF) legislation and supervised by the LLS. Such operations are conducted in secrecy with not even adjoining landholders contacted. Although there are limited paper protections for biodiversity, the reality on the ground is marked by the absence of any requirement for wildlife surveys, virtual self assessment by landholders, lack of environmental awareness and interest by contractors, insufficient resources for proper monitoring and reluctance to take action when breaches occur.

In the context of PNF policy, once again there appears to be no discussion of the cumulative impact of native forest logging on private land and the

implications of changed environmental circumstances following the burning of around 12 million hectares of native forest across NSW. We wait in hope.

In this missive from a country yokel I urge those responsible for managing our native vegetation to look at the big picture and consider whether your particular sector is fit for purpose.

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