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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 26 January 2023 2:48 PM
To: LLS Policy Mailbox
Cc: coffsharbour@parliament.nsw.gov.au
Subject: Submission - Native vegetation provisions of Local Land Services Act

From: Janine Cairns, [REDACTED], NSW.
Email: [REDACTED]
Date: 26th January 2023
Subject: Submission relating to the Native Vegetation Provisions of the Local Land Service Act

Following the NSW government's introduction of more lenient land-clearing laws in August 2017 land clearing has risen dramatically, prompting a review by the Natural Resources Commission. The Commission found badly burned native forests in NSW were at risk of "serious and irreversible" harm from the combined impacts of the 2019/20 fires and ongoing logging. In June 2019 the NSW Audit Office released a scathing report of NSW's management of native vegetation which concluded "the clearing of native vegetation on rural land is not effectively regulated and managed because the processes in place to support the regulatory framework are weak. There is no evidence-based assurance that clearing of native vegetation is being carried out in accordance with approvals. Responses to incidents of unlawful clearing are slow, with few tangible outcomes. Enforcement action is rarely taken against landholders who unlawfully clear native vegetation."

It's clear that land clearing rules are entirely inadequate to protect native vegetation and the little protection conferred can be readily removed if agricultural activities are impacted. Given the climate and wildlife crises we are facing, ongoing drought, bushfires, the influence of native vegetation on rainfall patterns, the extinction of more and more species, lowering protections was a serious policy error. Wholesale land clearing not only accelerates the loss of native species by removing habitat, but changes the very nature of our climate increasing the likelihood of floods and devastating bushfires. Now more than ever it is crucial to put a stop to wholesale clearance of native vegetation and preserve habitat for native species.

The widespread loss of vegetation and wildlife in the 2019/20 wildfires brought the very real threat of koala extinction in particular along the east coast of Australia to world recognition. However, the threat to the survival of the koala has been known and ignored by the federal and state governments in Australia for decades prior to these devastating fires.

A perfect example the failure of regulation is the behaviour of The Forestry Corporation of NSW. The Forestry Commission operates under legal frameworks requiring ecologically sustainable forest management which it continually and blatantly ignores. Six major breaches have been successfully prosecuted against Forestry Corporation since April 2020 yet it continues to receive support and encouragement from the NSW Government.

Australia is recognised as having the worst rate of mammal extinction in the world and is the only developed country on the list of the worst deforestation hotspots in the world (WWF International) – a shameful, shameful record.

The NSW Government needs to act now to address the ongoing widescale destruction of native vegetation in favour of the narrower interests of agriculture and development.

There needs to be:

- An immediate moratorium on large-scale land clearing and clearing of known threatened ecosystems and wildlife habitat and corridors until a comprehensive review of the impact of current regulations (or more specifically – failure of) on biodiversity is carried out.

- An investigation into options for providing support for regenerative, sustainable agricultural practices.
- Greatly improved monitoring and regulation to ensure sustainable land practices are rewarded and infringements are recognised and penalised.

Sincerely, Janine Cairns