

Environment Protection Bill Amendments 2019

Please note the following as comments on the draft changes to the above Bill especially guidelines involving the **Natural Bushland Clearing**.

Division 2 : 51A

Clearing of Native Vegetation

Permits to clear any original native vegetation including so called 'remnant' vegetation must be assessed for approval at an informed level and include the surrounding patches of similar vegetation to act as ongoing genetic 'pools'

Diversity of flora and fauna cannot maintain healthy development if these "patches are degraded incrementally or separated by vast distances from each other.

In some instances local councils not infrequently, have cleared roadside vegetation without approval and without valuation of the natural ecosystems that have been integral to maintaining genetic information for future viability. eg roadside verges, fire breaks.

The bill describes the need to maintain these natural original habitats for the future indefinitely.

They should not be destroyed for lack of knowledge or as a quick solutions for temporary problems.

In fact any clearing of the above "patches" of original vegetation that still persist should be protected to remain unchanged.

It is possible and vital, to find alternatives to meet the needs of economic and safety guidelines

Part IV Enforcement;

2 and 3

Local councils must take responsibility for the preservation of all remnant vegetation and enforce their preservation through legitimate ways to contribute to their survival.

This can be done through education, signage, oversight monitoring of public works and private behaviours as in any other activity in local councils.

A list of all the natural vegetation in the LGA would give all staff a quick reference for location and size of these remnant communities.

LGA bodies should have a duty of care role in maintaining a healthy natural environment.

Part V11B Environmental Monitoring Programmes.

Environmental monitoring Programmes to be expanded with regular reporting to the Authority (DWER)

Local 'watch dog' groups of concerned locals, members of local relevant clubs (WSWA & Birdlife) and others, going about their business as LGA staff or privately, to protect and report threats.

Feedback to the Authority should be encouraged by those on the ground where threats exist.

Ecological Community. p7

Relevant decision making authority;

If an appeal is only approved by the Authority ie staff of DWER, the decision cannot be immune from organisational bias.

It is imperative to have external and unpaid participation in decision making where the natural environment is subject to irreversible change.

In addition, information about impending decisions that have far reaching environmental impact should be advertised for general public comment.

How to bring these matters to the attention of the public could be expedited through environmental associations as well as public notices.

Definition of Environmental harm 3A(2) p 5

Relevant representation for decision making where permanent harm and loss will be sustained into the future.

Noted that some decisions can be made with the CEO and staff without calling a meeting ie in casual consultations, should not be made without relevant parties being part of the decision taken and written notes kept for the record.

The imperative pressure is to preserve as much original genetic stock both flora and fauna for generations to come.

Definition of 'Environmental Harm';

Part 3 (2)

P21 i&ii

All serious environmental changes (destruction) ie irreversible harm, should be counted as permanent LOSS.

Incidents of changes to the natural environment need to be followed up with charges for reparation (best possible efforts) and listed as a criminal record.

Offsets and replanting of vegetation do **not** validate the removal of original ecological communities.

Some LGAs and MRB bodies have been known to clear vegetation without consultation or seeking approval.

Approval should not be given as matter of course.

Clever solutions can be found for road safety and fire prevention that do not destroy ecological communities and the life there in.

The issue of road verges can be managed successfully by signage, speed limits and sight lines.

Wide scale land clearing in the agricultural regions cannot be allowed to continue.

Rationale of larger machinery has been the excuse to further clear remnant vegetation and causing the loss of the dependent fauna

This will lead to desertification as well as salt pollution of the land that will not sustain any worthwhile life.

In Summary,

We have an opportunity in the changes to the Environmental Protection Act and Clearing Regulations, to really protect our countryside from never ending individual and corporate demands before there is none left worth protecting.

As you know Australia was unique in the world for the diversity of flora and fauna that took thousands of years to establish on an inhospitable landscape.

I am requesting that the Authority will live up to it's mandate so that this countryside can continue to be a diverse landscape of flora and fauna.

Patricia Parker

28th January 2020