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Eco Restoration Specialists



Director
Planning Coordination and Support
Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney 2001

5 June 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are a small business in the Coffs Harbour local government area and work in the field of eco system restoration employing up to 12 people. As well as conducting on ground restoration works we also prepare vegetation management plans mostly for development proposals. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes in environmental protection zonings.

Environmental protection zonings play an important role ensuring that high value vegetation, Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC's) & threatened species, and Koala Habitat are protected from degradation and land clearing. They are a mechanism that ensures the protection for these habitats and even assists in the opportunity for their restoration (e.g. through the development process). I have a very good local knowledge of the vegetation in our area & the environmental zoning of areas & understand the affects that could occur if protection is reduced or altered.

We live in an area which is known as a biodiversity hotspot, for example in the region we have the highest diversity of eucalypt species of anywhere in the country. We have a massive range of diversity of habitats, EEC's and threatened species that have been highly impacted upon over the past twenty years as the human population of our area has increased dramatically. There is a great need to ensure habitats are protected from degradation and land clearing.

We strongly support the Review's endorsement of environmental zones and overlays in far north coast council Local Environment Plans and the Review's endorsement of environmental overlays for buffers around estuaries, streams, wetlands, and rainforest. As climate change (and predicted sea level rise) will have effects on our coastal areas I support cleared land subject to coastal hazards, being removed from the E2 zone, though these should be placed in a new coastal hazard zone rather than becoming an overlay.

We strongly object to:

1. The downgrading of rainforest, old growth forest, wetlands, mangroves, riparian vegetation and 'rare, endangered and vulnerable ecosystems' from E2 to E3 (Recommendation 1 & 7).
 - These areas are all of exceptional conservation value and deserve the highest protection.

- These values must remain under the protection of E2 zones as explicitly recommended by the NSW Department of Planning and Industry (Practice Note PN 09-002 – Environmental Protection Zones), and as is prescribed throughout the remainder of NSW.
 - This rezoning will also weaken protection from CSG and other mining activities in our most sensitive natural areas by automatically permitting these activities under the 'Mining' SEPP - State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007.
2. The downgrading proposed E4 zones to residential zones (Recommendation 14).
 - These areas include core Koala Habitat, several Endangered Ecological Communities and significant threatened species habitat and their exceptional conservation value deserves the highest protection.
 - These values must remain under the protection of E4 zones as explicitly recommended by the NSW Department of Planning and Industry (Practice Note PN 09-002 – Environmental Protection Zones), and as is prescribed throughout the remainder of NSW.
 - These values cannot are not given adequate protected by the Tree Preservation Order alone.
 3. The removal of all protection for wildlife corridors mapped by the National Parks & Wildlife Service
 - Wildlife corridors should be included as an environmental overlay to ensure they are considered in planning decisions.
 - Corridors are an important method of ensuring species survival especially in the time of rapid climate change that we are in
 4. Allowing 'extensive agriculture' such as grazing, cropping and irrigated pasture within E2 zones (Recommendation 4).
 - These activities can be highly destructive of the ecological values in environmentally sensitive areas
 - This redrafting of E2 provisions will also weaken protection from CSG and other mining activities in our most sensitive natural areas by automatically permitting these activities under the 'Mining' SEPP - State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007.

We further recommend that:

1. Core Koala habitat identified in a Koala plan of Management should be included in an E2 zone rather than just as an environmental overlay. If we do not move to urgently protect Kola habitat I fear their local extinction will occur in the future
2. The Government should support the review's recommendation that all land designated within an environment zone should be a priority area for the application of incentive based mechanisms, including financial incentives, rate rebates, management assistance, and local award schemes. As most high value vegetation is situated on private land this would ensure its

protection as well as creating employment opportunities (within the area of environmental restoration) and fulfilling the need for carbon sequestration, by native vegetation.

3. That heathlands and shorebird roosting and nesting areas be included in E2 zones.
4. That 'extensive agriculture' be prohibited in all Shires to avoid automatically permitting CSG and other mining activities in our most sensitive natural areas under the 'Mining' SEPP - State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007.

Please help to protect areas of high value native vegetation and the species that reside in them.

Yours sincerely,

Coffs Coast Bush Regeneration
(Brent Hely
Kris Hely
Rick Crane)