

# Friends of Watery Gully

27/2/2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Submission: Review of the native vegetation clearing regulations – outcomes report.**

In Wattle Glen we have a community group, the Friends of Watery Gully, who meet monthly on a Sunday morning for planting and weeding to promote our indigenous vegetation. This group is now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year of such voluntary work!

The group works on council land and roadsides, and in the past, Crown Land in conjunction with the Nillumbik Council.

We find it incongruous that while this work is making a positive contribution towards our vegetation biodiversity “over the fence” on some private land indigenous trees and lower storey vegetation are being removed with council either unable to act or react with relatively miniscule consequences.

Therefore our Friends Group strongly supports the aims of the [Review of the native vegetation clearing regulations – outcomes report](#) and ask that a strong stance is taken in these regulations in support of our native vegetation.

The Wattle Glen postcode area is located on both sides of Melbourne’s Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) with residential zoning inside the UGB and rural conservation zones as part of Melbourne’s Green Wedge on the outside. The location of this divide has not been changed since the introduction of Melbourne’s Planning Scheme in the 1970s. Because of this location Wattle Glen residents are very aware of the value of maintaining Melbourne’s Green Wedge areas and of protecting its biodiversity.

Our Friends Group agrees that **Victoria’s ecosystems provide important habitat for our unique native plants and animals** and within the Green Wedge parts of Nillumbik this is certainly true, but recent clearing on private land has added to the fragmentation of local habitat corridors.

We agree that **a healthy environment is also the foundation of many of the productive activities that underpin our economy**. For example, in Nillumbik there is a very creative Regional and Local Trails network being established and these trails can provide excellent recreation, health and wellbeing opportunities because most of the trails pass through bush areas on indigenous vegetation. If further lack of proper land management of private land is not curtailed then this healthy natural environment will be lost to trail users.

We agree in principle that there is the **need to protect and enhance our natural environment for future generations while ensuring our economy can grow and prosper**, but at the same time areas such as the Nillumbik Green Wedge which has been designed from back in the 1970s to be the “lungs of Melbourne” must be respected. Inappropriate intrusion and development including land clearing cannot be allowed to happen. From an economic point of view, given Wattle Glen is a Gateway to the Green Wedge for many of Melbourne’s residents it is imperative that strong native

tree regulations are maintained and “they will come” to enjoy the natural environment. Over recent years there has been a huge increase in groups of bicycle riders using our green environment for weekend exercise and at the same time stopping to support local business in Wattle Glen and neighbouring Hurstbridge.

We applaud the notion that **the Victorian Government is committed to improving the care and protection of our environment** and hope that the proposed native regulation clearing regulations will be introduced as soon as possible and not be watered down or renege on for anti-environment reasons as were the recent planning amendments C81 and C101 in Nillumbik. As a community sitting on the UGB, we have had to fight off various attempts by land speculators to nibble away with applications for rezoning of the Green Wedge. Part of their strategy is often to first reduce the native vegetation so as to erroneously argue that re-zoning will not affect the environment. So far we have maintained the boundary and hopefully stronger native vegetation clearing regulations will be able to keep the Green Wedge environment for future generations.

We applaud these new State Government native vegetation clearing regulations and ask on behalf of the Friends of Watery Gully and for the benefit of the Nillumbik Green Wedge environment and the rest of Victoria’s indigenous vegetation areas that are impacted by this initiative, that the new regulations come into practice as soon as possible and will be as strong as possible.

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Volunteer Convenor of Friends of Watery Gully