Review of the native vegetation clearing regulations – Consultation Paper – Phase 2 Public Consultation

Our company is encouraged to know Andrew’s Government is undertaking a review of Native Vegetation Clearing. In our opinion and experience, past systems have had some effective and ineffective components to safeguard against unnecessary clearing of vegetation.

Our company has a proud, multi-generational heritage of being involved in sustainable timber production Private Land in Victoria. For this reason we feel compelled to raise concerns about the current Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations and implore the Andrews Government to show leadership in ensuring the review has been properly informed of the difference between ‘clearing’ of vegetation and the temporary, partial removal of vegetation that occurs under sustainable timber harvesting.

We would welcome being contacted to undertake in-field explanations and inspections, to show, first-hand, how sustainable timber harvesting is carried out on private land.

Private Landholders Opportunity to Undertake Sustainable Timber Production

The current Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations, and those detailed in the Consultation Paper, published by DELWP, dated 2016, has some major, possibly illegal and possibly unintended consequences. The result will be prohibiting a private land owner to commercially utilise their land, to make a living / income from an enterprise and purpose for which they have legally purchased it: specifically, the sustainable and ongoing production of timber. Sustainable timber production is not land clearing. Whoever has provided input to the current paper has apparently been ill-informed, or not considered, the sciences of sustainable timber production.

We are confident that within the current DELWP, particularly regional staff, there are still enough forest land management professionals, that informed discussion can be undertaken by the biodiversity section of the department. Most forest professionals are known to have been deployed into the fire business of the department and are clearly no longer consulted when it comes to forest management: private and public.
There is ongoing demand for native forest timber products. Victorian forests, including those privately harvested, meet requirements of international certification systems for their level of sustainability. If timber products are not able to be produced in a sustainable way in the state of Victoria, the most likely option is for products to be increasingly sourced from overseas (or interstate) unsustainably managed forest estates where the alternative results in greater global impact is definitely net loss of vegetation. Completely contrary to the desired outcome of the Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations.

The Consultation Paper has made the mistake of running a broad-brush over all native vegetation, as if in all situations it will be ‘cleared’, never to return. Timber production, by definition and law, does not fit with this assumption in any way. All Victoria’s legislation in Forest Act, Conservation, Forest & Land Act, Planning and Environment Act, ensures that timber production must not result in permanent removal of native vegetation, where an approved plan is to be utilised.

The state of Victorian has an ongoing heritage of sustainable timber harvesting pre-dating the Forest Act of 1958. Indeed the wonderful legacy of sustainable harvesting is evidenced in the sometimes heated discussion of ‘preserving, rather than ongoing utilisation, of the’ forests of the Central Highlands. These and many other Victorian native forest areas have been logged sustainably for nearly 150 years. That’s is why they are still valued by industry, scientists, water corporations, rural and urban communities alike. The rules and regulation that ensure and govern sustainable harvesting have evolved in Victoria, as forest and timber industry.

In summary there is ‘NO NET LOSS’ of native vegetation when the rules employed by the Native Vegetation Framework (pre 2013) SUSTAINABLE TIMBER PRODUCTION rules, regulations and supervision are utilised.

Peter McConachy

Managing Director
Firewood and Harvesting Supplies Pty Ltd