Regulatory Strategy and Design,
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning,
PO Box 500,
East Melbourne, 8002

3rd May, 2016

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Review of the native vegetation clearing regulations, Consultation Paper

I wish to make comment on this consultation paper, knowing full well that submissions closed on the 29th April, 2016.

However I would like to point out that my first request for a printed copy of this paper was made to NECMA on the 23rd March, which in turn deflected my request to another government department, which in turn was deflected a third time until I was eventually sent a copy, which arrived in my post office box on Friday, 29th April, 2016.

My comments relate to native vegetation clearing of smaller rural allotments, soon to become peri-urban allotments by incremental and increasing development.

The Alpine Shire has 97% of its area covered by Crown Land – State Forest, reserves and National Parks – all covered in native vegetation.

However the Alpine Shire relies very heavily on the tourism sector for its economic growth and well-being, which is why the Shire is a tourist magnet in the state.

Statistics show that the highest visitor numbers occur in the autumn and the reason is simply because the exotic plantings of trees and shrubs.

Exotics give an ambience to the area which is not replicated by plantings of native vegetation.

The Alpine Shire needs to maintain its tourist appeal into the future for both the community and council’s long term viability.

This will not occur unless there is a continual and ongoing approval to the plantings of exotic trees and shrubs.
Whether clearing of native vegetation is offset by replacement or by a net gain, the use of exotic plantings should be allowable especially in the case of smaller ‘rural residential’ allotments.

Whilst the latter could be construed as subjective, there should be provision in the regulations for councils, not only the Alpine Shire but other Councils as well, to consider ‘net gain’ through the use of exotic plantings.

It is worth noting that exotic plantings also provide habitat and food sources for birds and animals.

And I re-iterate, my comments relate only to those smaller allotments in and around areas of high tourism and economic value.

In regard to other issues, inaccurate maps are a bane to everyone and the need to ensure that they are up to date and verified by on ground data assessment is paramount.

The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation has always allowed wholesale clearing of native vegetation on development allotments – what level of vegetation with what level of bio-diversity has in reality been long lost.

The data base of vegetation and bio-diversity must have a starting date.

Likewise, the assessment of “what is important native vegetation” with a one size fits all approach, is ludicrous. Good plants or pest plants in the alpine region may be the exact opposite in the mallee. Proposed improvement #11 needs to acknowledge this fact.

Thanking you for accepting my late submission.

Yours faithfully,