The recommendations do target the weaknesses of the existing regulations and should lead to significantly better protection of the State’s biodiversity. However, there is clear resistance to the regulations in some quarters and this is reflected in the attitudes of some councillors. This makes it very difficult for planning staff in those areas to be effective in their duties. For this reason DELWP needs to have a presence in the field and be able to provide support for planning staff as needed. This support could include scientific, planning, enforcement and monitoring activities.

The Biodiversity 2036 paper refers to significant losses as a result of clearing exemptions. We suggest that a requirement to report to Council all plans to undertake exempt clearing be introduced, using the low risk pathway as a guide. This will provide hard data on the quantity of clearing that occurs and over time is likely to lead to greater compliance.

All offset sites including crown land where used need to be identified and secured before the permit is issued. In addition there needs to be a clear monitoring guideline for offset sites including an inspection say 5 years after the permit is issued to ensure that the requirements have been successfully completed.

Ensuring that the offset sites are maintained long term is also an issue that will require some funding. The use of Trust for Nature covenanted sites does impose a cost for that organisation, and we suggest that government contribute toward that organisation’s monitoring costs.

John Boadle

on behalf of Kara Kara Conservation Management Network