Protection of remnant native vegetation is a much more serious issue than is often appreciated by 'responsible authorities' in that they do not have the knowledge, experience or sufficiently long time frames in which to view changes. Death of 1000 cuts and the precautionary principle are not really appreciated.

Far too often decisions are made in a vastly uneven playing field where wildlife corridors and connectivity are ignored in favour of 'development'. When well funded companies take community volunteer groups to VCAT, the members do not seem to understand how biased the whole process has become. The consultants only get paid if they bend the truth and the community groups’ experts who are often more experienced and better trained than the consultants they challenge, have their case undermined as they are not earning their living as a consultant.

Exemptions to clearing conditions need to be severely wound back. We have already lost far too much and need to reverse the process.

The offset scheme needs to be carefully evaluated and re-considered. It is too easily misused and produced serious net losses rather than net gains.

Many losses are accepted on the grounds that the vegetation is now degraded or 'derived'. However this does not mean that it can no longer support a healthy native ecosystem, just that it has been changed.

We have to accept that humans have done irreversible damage to our flora and fauna yet new ecosystems will evolve and stabilise if we give them a chance by maintaining connectivity and reversing damage.

We need to reverse the thinking that native veg is a problem (to developers) and see it as an asset to the whole community. More education is needed all round.

Climate change is a very worrying issue and the impacts (less rain and higher temperatures as well as wide swings) need to be considered. Buffering is required.

Stuart McCallum

Friends of Bannockburn Bush