

# Submission to the Private Native Forestry Review 2018

By Dr. Nola Firth



I am making a submission to the Private Native Forestry Review as a member of the NSW community. I have the deepest concern about the current state of the environment in New South Wales. Any reforms to the current codes of practice need to urgently support conservation of native forest on private land.

## **Recommendations**

1. That government policy regarding native forest on private land urgently be changed to encouragement of landholders towards conservation of all remaining native forest and regeneration of native forest.

We are now in a time of mass extinction with a major contributor being loss of native habitat. According to the Adelaide Botanical Gardens, we are losing species at a rate of two per day, with this rate likely to dramatically increase unless there is immediate action. Further, according to a major report by the World Wildlife Fund, 60% of native animals, fish and birds have been wiped out since 1970.<sup>1</sup> Just recently there have been biblical style sudden deaths (e.g, millions of fish dying in the Darling River, 23,000 endangered flying foxes dying in one weekend in north Queensland). In New South Wales many animals and plants are threatened or alarmingly close to extinction, including koalas.

We can afford to lose no more trees. Native forests are resources that provide habitat, cool the planet, reduce carbon emissions, attract rainfall, purify and moderate the flow of water, support microscopic soil communities, and give people spiritual and recreational refreshment. Native forests need to be presented to landholders as a precious resource in their own right and no longer as a disposable commodity. Native forest landholders need to be able to have their land assessed for its biodiversity value, earn carbon credits for native forest and receive

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/living-planet-report-2018>, accessed 11/2/19.

financial support for its conservation and rehabilitation (including restoration of bell minor associated dieback).

2. That Private Native Forestry be the responsibility of the Minister for Environment not the Minister for Lands and Forestry.

Given the urgent need for native forests to be phased out as a commodity for harvest and to be seen as a necessary and increasingly precious environmental resource, the responsibility for the area should definitely reside with the Minister for Environment - not with the Minister for Lands and Forestry.

3. Accredited ecologists need to be involved in decision making regarding management of native forest on private land including when logging is not the activity involved.

Specialist, scientific knowledge is needed regarding management of native forests on private land. Accredited ecologists need to be involved in decision making regarding use of such land, especially in areas of environmental significance and in relation to endangered species. In the light of the dire situation regarding species loss and a damaged environment, self assessment is not a responsible option.

4. Activities regarding Private Native Forest use needs to be methodically recorded, publically available, stringently and independently monitored and non compliance acted on swiftly.

Management by the state of our increasingly precious native forests must be responsible and accountable. Public accessibility, regular reporting and compliance structures are thus essential as is independence in the process. (Lack of compliance has been a major issue with regard to the Regional Forest Agreements. Such a significant and distressing issue needs to be pre-empted in the current reform of native forest management on private land.)

Thank you for considering this submission.

Regards

Nola Firth