

NATIVE VEGETATION UPDATE

January 2012

NSW FARMERS' NATIVE VEGETATION ROUNDTABLES

NSW Farmers' President Fiona Simson and CEO Matt Brand hit the road in early October 2011 to hear members' concerns with native vegetation laws first hand. Roundtables were held in Casino, Tenterfield, Moree and Nyngan and a total of 300 members turned out to discuss their concerns and workshop NSW Farmers' position.

Feedback from the workshops had a substantial impact on the way NSW Farmers is approaching native vegetation reform by moving away from map-based landscape planning and increasing the emphasis on outcomes and flexibility.

Following the workshops, NSW Farmers' Conservation and Resource Management Committee met in Sydney to condense the feedback into a position statement setting out what farmers in NSW require – both immediately through the current regulation review, and in the medium term through changes to the *Native Vegetation Act*.

The position statement calls on the Government to deliver:

- Legislation limiting broad scale land clearing – not protection for single plants
- Regional landscape planning by landholders and CMAs to set parameters for environmental management
- Legislation which balances conservation of biodiversity against the social and economic benefits of productive land use
- A move away from PVPs and other instruments which affect the title of private land
- CMAs which can advise farmers on best practice natural resource management on a proactive and informal basis
- Strong emphasis on self assessment for development within the parameters of the landscape plan, with support from CMAs
- Penalties that are appropriate given the nature of clearing offences
- Flexibility to manage and protect grasslands subject to triple bottom line objectives
- A best practice Soil and Pasture Management Code of Practice with incentives and support for participating landholders
- Approvals must be supported by a cost effective, speedy and independent appeal process
- CMAs that actively promote remediation of invasive native scrub

Please visit our website (www.nswfarmers.org.au) to see a copy of our full position statement on native vegetation reform, or contact our Member Service Centre on 1300 794 000 to request a copy.

NSW Farmers' Association

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REVIEW OF NATIVE VEGETATION REGULATIONS

The Minister for Environment, the Hon. Robyn Parker MP announced a review of native vegetation regulations on 13 September 2011. The Minister's announcement stated that although the Government intends to look at whether changes to the *Native Vegetation Act* need to be made, at this stage it would be confining the review to only the Native Vegetation Regulation, Private Native Forestry Code of Practice, and the Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology.

As part of the review, Office of Environment and Heritage and the Catchment Management Authorities held a series of workshops across the state throughout November 2011. NSW Farmers had advised against timing the meetings during harvest, which led to some rescheduling, however, most meetings proceeded. A summary of feedback received at each of these meetings is now available at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/ReviewofNVRegulations.htm>. In order to provide an opportunity for farmers who could not attend these meetings to have their say, the Office of Environment and Heritage has made an online survey available at http://engage.environment.nsw.gov.au/portal/natureconservation/nvreg/native_veg_survey. The purpose of the survey is to gather information on the way the government regulates native vegetation. NSW Farmers encourages members to complete the survey if they have not already done so.

Following the CMA workshops the Government is now preparing a draft regulation which we expect will be released for public consultation in late February or early March 2012. NSW Farmers is attending regular briefings about the progress of the review with the Office of Environment and Heritage and meeting with Minister Parker's office to discuss our concerns.

WHAT ACTION IS NSW FARMERS TAKING?

Following detailed consultation with members, the NSW Farmers position statement will be the basis for our lobbying activities over the coming year. Through the current regulation review, NSW Farmers is having detailed input through the Office of Environment and Heritage and meeting regularly with the bureaucrats running the review process. Once the draft regulation is released for consultation in the next two months, NSW Farmers will prepare a detailed response setting out the changes that need to be made and talk to political stakeholders about our concerns.

We are also actively educating politicians and the environment movement about the realities of 16 years of flawed native vegetation policy. We're meeting regularly with a number of politicians who are showing strong support for reform, as well as the office of the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Primary Industries. On 30 January 2012, Opposition Leader John Robertson will be visiting a member's property to look at the issues he is facing with enforcement. We have extended an invite to the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Western NSW and Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources to tour the Nyngan area in March 2012 and meet with landholders affected by native vegetation policy there. NSW Farmers is committed to achieving fundamental native vegetation regulatory reform and will be working hard over the coming year to achieve it. If you have comments/feedback/ideas that you would like to share, please contact the Member Service Centre on 1300 794 000 to speak with our policy staff.