



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO 7 – PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

MEDIA RELEASE

New parliamentary inquiry into the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29 June 2021

The protection of biodiversity in New South Wales is the focus of a new parliamentary inquiry, with all members of the community invited to have their say.

The Upper House inquiry is examining the integrity of the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, also known as the Biodiversity Conservation Scheme. The scheme is in place to help minimise the impact of land development or clearing on the state's biodiversity, and to offset any impacts that do occur through the purchase of 'biodiversity credits' or payment into the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Fund.

Chairing the Planning and Environment Committee's inquiry is Cate Faehrmann MLC who said the inquiry will explore how effective the scheme is in preventing the loss of biodiversity, including threatened species and habitat.

"Protecting ecosystems and biodiversity is fundamental to the sustainability of all life on Earth, and the loss of biodiversity poses an unacceptable risk to human and ecosystem health", said Ms Faehrmann.

The committee will examine the use of offsets to compensate for biodiversity losses from major projects.

"Large areas of threatened species habitat is being cleared on the basis that it can be 'offset' by purchasing land elsewhere," Ms Faehrmann said "Concerns around offsetting practices have recently materialised whereby land-based offsets in Western Sydney have been sold to the government for prices much higher than what the land was privately bought for. It is also unclear whether there is any conflict of interest in the way land used for offsets was recommended to the government."

Ms Faehrmann said, "The scheme potentially lacks some of the protections you would expect from a trading scheme valued at hundreds of millions of dollars annually."

The inquiry will look into the role of the Biodiversity Conservation Trust in administering the scheme, including its transparency and oversight. Offsetting costs and the ability for private landowners to engage in the scheme will also be examined.

The committee welcomes submissions from interested stakeholders and members of the community. Submissions are due by 31 August 2021 and can be lodged via the [inquiry webpage](#).

For further information about the inquiry, including the terms of reference, visit www.bit.ly/biodiversity-inquiry. You can find updates on the inquiry as it moves along by following the Upper House on Facebook via www.facebook.com/nswupperhouse.

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, Cate Faehrmann MLC, on 0428 837 292