



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 7 – PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **REPORT TABLED – INTEGRITY OF THE BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS SCHEME**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**24 NOVEMBER 2022**

A New South Wales Upper House committee examining the integrity of the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme has today handed down its [report](#), after an eighteen-month inquiry.

The Upper House committee, which included members of the government, opposition and crossbench, received over 100 submissions and held four hearings into the scheme.

Ms Sue Higginson, committee chair, said: "This scheme was introduced in 2016 as part of a package of land reforms. An offsets scheme is supposed to protect biodiversity, by ensuring developers offset unavoidable biodiversity losses due to development with equivalent biodiversity gains elsewhere, meaning there is 'no net loss'.

"What we heard through this inquiry, however, is that the scheme's design allows too much flexibility to trade off threatened species in exchange for cash, without guarantee that genuinely equivalent offsets will ever be found. The report recommends that the design of the scheme be reviewed and reformed to ensure the ecological integrity of offsetting practices. This is essential if we are to turn back the tide of destruction and prevent extinction of even more native species.

"Further, we have heard that this scheme's operation is so opaque and complex that no stakeholder group has full confidence in it. With little transparency about the biodiversity offset market, or what offsets have been used for what developments, or the ecological outcomes of the scheme, it is not surprising that allegations of insider trading and collusion have surrounded it from the outset. The report makes recommendations to improve the functioning and increase the transparency of the scheme.

"This committee has worked together to deliver this report and its nineteen recommendations, and I thank my fellow committee members as well as all inquiry participants for their input. I urge the government to address the concerns aired about the scheme by implementing the recommendations in full. We owe it to future generations to reform this scheme and protect what biodiversity remains in New South Wales."

Further information about the inquiry, including submissions, transcripts of public hearings and the final report can be found on the [committee's website](#).

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*For further information please contact Committee Chair, Ms Sue Higginson MLC, on 9230 2273*