

**Submission
No 55**

**INQUIRY INTO LOCAL LAND SERVICES AMENDMENT
(MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2020**

Name: Mr Steve Dobbys

Date Received: 25 February 2021

In November 2020, the NSW Parliament failed to pass amendments to the Local Land Services Act, with a Liberal MP crossing the floor. NSW Farmers strongly supported these amendments which aimed to decouple the Act from the Koala Habitat Protection SEPP (2019). The Bill was referred to an Upper House committee for an inquiry. NSW Farmers has made a submission supporting the Bill and submissions are still being accepted.

This is an important issue for farmers in NSW, and one that was not adequately understood by those that blindly supported the Koala SEPP, without considering the enormous consequences it would have for farming businesses.

We strongly oppose the Koala SEPP and key points are:

- Planning instruments like the Koala SEPP are designed for urban and peri urban areas, and do not take into account how agricultural land and agri-business is conducted
- Private landholders manage the majority of the landscape of NSW, and in doing so protect koalas and other vulnerable species from fire and pests. The SEPP will stop the ability of land owners to manage their land and put koalas in a more vulnerable position
- The SEPP can turn off the land management code, causing significant interruption to farming businesses and preventing activities such as thinning that protect koalas. No assessment has been done to understand the extent of this damage to agriculture.
- The SEPP relies on the theoretical location of tree species to define habitat of koalas, and in doing so can quarantine land from agriculture for no reason when koalas are not there, but may have been 18 years ago. It is untenable to bring in a regulation of land without knowing which land it will effect, and to what extent.
- The governments' reforms to the LLS Act and with the Biodiversity Conservation Act in 2016, provide both incentive to protect koalas, and protection through strong laws
- Decoupling the Koala SEPP from the LLS act retains these strong measures to foster koala survival and regulate their management without harming productivity
- Good environmental outcomes rely on participation by land owners not prohibition by Government.

- To assist koala populations, the knowledge and experience of rural land owners should use, and complimented by incentive and education, not by locking up productive land.

In lieu of the Bill passing, the Government revoked the 2019 SEPP and have temporarily reverted back to the previous SEPP 44. This is an interim solution and it is likely that the Government will re-introduce a new SEPP in the coming months. NSW Farmers is advocating for a solution that will promote koala outcomes while understanding the needs of agriculture and how risks to biodiversity on farm may be best managed.

Steve Dobbys
NSW Farmers member