

**INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY OF THE NSW  
BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS SCHEME**

**Organisation:** Birding NSW inc.

**Date Received:** 31 August 2021

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Direct: Ian Bailey,

The Committee Chair  
Inquiry into the Integrity of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Scheme  
Parliament House Sydney NSW 2000  
31 August 2021.  
Via the Parliamentary website address.

**RE: Submission to the Inquiry into the Integrity of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Scheme.**

On behalf of the 1000 plus Members and Friends of Birding NSW inc. I submit our **vehement opposition** to the continuation of the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, BioBanking, Biodiversity Credits and the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Fund.

The grounds for our opposition are that it is actually impossible to replace the biodiversity at any particular development site. Not "well-nigh" or "almost" it is *actually impossible*. Even more so if money is paid into a fund that allocates cash to a landowner who promises to retain an area of bushland in return. Where is the guarantee of "in perpetuity"? What is the flora and fauna set that is said to compare with that which has been lost?

- Each biogeographic sector of NSW, down to a few hundred square metres, has a complex, diverse set of living flora and fauna. Even sections of bush that represent "transitional forest" cannot be replaced.
- The whole of the natural bushland that existed at Anglo-Saxon settlement had taken many tens of thousands of years to become what existed then. Weather-worn rocks, ancient trees up to 1000 years old, water flowing both above and underground, flora and fauna each dependent on the other for life. How does mankind replace such a system?
- It is a ridiculous concept that an area of land could be regenerated to match one destroyed. Even restoring a patch of bush only partly used such as by selective logging, will never be the same again. It takes 150 years for hollows to begin appearing in trees. Australian Honeyeaters are amongst the biggest in the world because of the plentiful supply of food from substantial plants such as Banksia. An ancient association.
- When land is cleared all life-forms are killed. There is nowhere for them to go despite the popular belief.
- As land is cleared, the soil, air and plants begin to dry out. Weather patterns change. We have the evidence.
- NSW and the ACT now have enough cleared land for the populations to live and prosper. We do not need to clear more land. Instead, the Governments could place a five-year moratorium on clearing and tree-felling to give the scientists time to map existing bush and recommend what future changes may be made, if any.
- While there does not appear to be considerations for water security in this Inquiry, that will be just as important as vegetation. Crops that are too thirsty for Australia. Water-trading as a commodity. Water theft.

Biodiversity Offsets must be discontinued, banned and replaced with laws that protect what we have left. The Sydney Basin is over 90% cleared. The slopes west of the Divide are cleared up to 70% (Ocean Shores to Desert Dunes, David Keith, NPWS 2006) and they are conservative figures. Clear more trees and the balance of nature will be permanently compromised. We must stop clearing now.

Birding Clubs such as ours have the most knowledgeable of naturalists to make comment as the creatures we study are quickly adaptive and early indicators of the health of our bush. That is why the Office of Conservation calls for **the abandonment of any Biodiversity Offsets Scheme**, and replaced by Protection of the Environment.

Sincerely

Ian Bailey, Office of Conservation, Birding NSW inc.