Submission No 39

INQUIRY INTO PLANNING SYSTEM AND THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

Organisation: Ryde Hunters Hill Flora & Fauna Preservation Society Inc

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RHHFFPS

Ryde - Hunter's Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society

Member of Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W.

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Ms Sue Higginson MLC
Inquiry Chair
Portfolio Committee No.7-Planning and Environment
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Re: **Inquiry into the planning system and the impacts of climate change on the environment and communities**

We are a local environment group established over 57 years ago. The aims and objectives of the Society include-

- Respect for the land and its flora and fauna and original custodians:
- The education of the membership and the community, particularly in the local area, in nature conservation and protection of the environment.
- The promotion of ecologically sustainable land use and development at the local, state, national and international levels.
- Advocating measures at the local, state, national and international level necessary to safeguard the environment from all forms of pollution to ensure, clean air, clean water and a healthy environment and address climate change.

The Society has been actively campaigning over many years on the mitigation of climate change, ceasing further exploitation of fossil fuels, supporting renewable energy, protecting native forests and wildlife, opposing destructive land clearing and preserving our precious biodiversity.

Please accept the following submission in respect of Terms of Reference (e) for the Inquiry.

Submission

We submit that a new instrument be introduced to the planning system that ensures areas are set aside that will support the **range of native** biodiversity impacted by climate change.

Supporting statement

Biodiversity in New South Wales is threatened by climate change and the impact of climate change on the frequency and intensity of fire and floods and by sea level rises.

For example salt marsh is a critically endangered ecological community that will be impacted by sea level rises caused by climate change. Current areas of salt marsh will be inundated by the rising water levels and lost unless there are areas where that ecological community can establish itself in the changed water levels critical for its survival.

We have a particular interest in the Field of Mars Reserve at East Ryde where salt marsh is currently under threat from various factors including sea level rises, **as well as stormwater run-off from increasing urban**

development in our catchments. Appropriate intervention to preserve the salt marsh is a difficult proposition. While we work to maintain current salt marsh, we are increasingly aware that we must find ways to facilitate this ecological community establishing itself in new areas within ~~in~~ the Reserve when changes to water levels and other environmental factors require a choice between its migration or its loss.

Without intervention there will not be any suitable new areas for the salt marsh to establish **and its critical ecological role will be diminished**.

This is an example of what will occur on a larger scale unless areas are set aside for ecological communities to survive in the changed climate. In this case it may be possible to modify the landscape in the Reserve to provide for new areas where the salt marsh can establish. This is possible because the salt marsh is in a reserve zoned for environmental protection, although it raises the question of the impact of modifying the landscape on other ecological communities in the Reserve.

Not all critically endangered ecological communities are protected by relevant environmental zones and more generally biodiversity is subject to **heavy** development pressure as evidenced by the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan. Unless provision is made on a state wide basis for setting aside areas for biodiversity to establish itself following the rise in average temperatures biodiversity will **continue to** be lost.

In respect of fires and floods, the increased frequency and intensity caused by climate change will adversely impact biodiversity in locations where these events occur. The state wide approach is necessary to also ensure that areas are set aside that will support biodiversity regeneration in response to these events.

Identifying areas that are necessary to support biodiversity threatened by the impact of climate change requires a comprehensive review of biodiversity across the state and consideration of locations that would be appropriate to set aside. Much work is currently underway to map biodiversity in the state but identifying the areas to support future biodiversity needs to be done **urgently**.

This also requires a new environmental instrument to zone appropriate areas as set aside for the future needs of biodiversity. Under the current planning system there are no instruments that currently provide for this purpose. The NPWS Act 1974 and the EP&A Act 1979 currently do not include relevant provisions. A relevant instrument may be a SEPP that provides for C2 Environmental Conservation zoning for the areas identified and set aside for the future needs of biodiversity

Conclusion

We believe it vital that a new instrument should be introduced to the planning system that ensures areas are set aside that will support the biodiversity impacted by climate change. Unless this occurs the list of critically endangered ecological communities and the list of lost **indigenous** biodiversity will increase **to our detriment**.

Francis Breen
President

1 November 2023