

The Hon Ryan Smith, MP  
Minister for the Environment and Climate Change  
25 April 2012

Dear Minister,

Re: Review of the 'Native Vegetation Management Framework'  
An open letter to the Minister and his constituency

As individuals and groups working to enhance and protect the native vegetation within your electorate, we wish to state our concern about any possible weakening of rules that protect the natural environment. We are worried that the proposed review of the Native Vegetation Management Framework could lead to such a weakening.

We endorse the key elements of the existing framework including:

- The net gain policy,
- a three step approach to assessing native vegetation,
- “like for like” for offsets,
- a transparent, high quality assessment methodology

Our concern leads us to ask you the following questions:

1. How will the Native Vegetation Management Framework be reviewed? Will the consultation process involve agencies and communities in formulating changes to the Native Vegetation Management Framework?
2. What steps are being taken to include an assessment of the economic value of vegetation and the services it provides, in addition to the apparent regulatory cost? I.e. how will you access the best available ecological science to aid in modifying the framework?
3. Does your government recognise the need to protect the natural environment on both public and private land? If so, how will the review of the framework incorporate this?
4. Is your government considering further exemptions for clearing of native vegetation?
5. What incentives does your government propose to encourage landholders to protect natural habitats on their land?
6. What steps are being taken to ensure a coherent state policy for protecting the environment that is home not only to native plants and animals but to all of us?
7. How will your government commit funding for this purpose?

We ask these questions because of our particular concerns that our Warrandyte area could lose its important natural values-those same values that attracted many of us to the area in the first place. We are also concerned that weak regulation will accelerate the loss of the remaining native bushland across Victoria.

Yours faithfully,

Middle Yarra Landcare Network, Artur Muchow

(including Friends of Warrandyte State Park, Lynda Gilbert; Andersons Creek Catchment Area Landcare Group, Fritz Uhl; and Wonga Park Environment Group, Paulina Mardes)

Yarra Riverkeeper Association, Ian Penrose

North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula Landcare Group,

Stony Creek Landcare