



**Nature
Conservation
Council** The voice for
nature in NSW

MEETING YOUR LOCAL MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

A GUIDE TO ASSIST MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

This guide has been prepared by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW to assist its members and supporters to meet with their local Member of Parliament to discuss proposed changes to NSW biodiversity and conservation laws.

The guide consists of:

- *Tips for contacting and meeting your local MP*
- *Talking points: ideas for issues and questions to raise in your meeting*
- *Additional Material*

Additional information is available at www.nature.org.au/NewDealForNature

Once you have had a chance to meet with your local MP, we would appreciate your feedback on how the meeting went and what outcomes you were able to achieve.

For further information or assistance, and to report back on your meeting, please do not hesitate to contact the Nature Conservation Council on (02) 9516 1488 or ncc@nature.org.au

TIPS FOR CONTACTING AND MEETING YOUR LOCAL MP

WHO IS YOUR LOCAL MP?

To find the local MP in your area visit the [NSW Parliament website](#).

Not sure what electorate you are in? Find out on the [website of the NSW electorate office](#).

Still having trouble – contact us at ncc@nature.org.au

PREPARE A DELEGATION

It is often helpful to take other people who support your cause along with you to your meeting to share the discussion and take notes. Two or three people are good.

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

While it is sometimes possible to make an appointment by ringing the office of your local MP, it is often best to put your request in writing. Some MPs may require that all requests for a meeting are made in writing.

Once you have sent your letter, it is useful to follow up with a phone call, especially if you have not received a response to your request in a reasonable time.

BE PREPARED

It helps to be well prepared for your meeting with your local MP. Research the issues you wish to discuss and prepare by identifying a number of talking points and questions that you would like to raise at the meeting – and link them to local issues. To assist, we have prepared some talking points which you may wish to use.

Consider what material you may want to leave with the MP, including any reports you may rely on. We have a number of briefing notes and reports you can use. These are outlined in the talking points and you can download a copy from the NCC website:

www.nature.org.au/NewDealForNature

AT THE MEETING

- Be respectful – arrive on time, dress presentably, and be polite to the MP and staff.
- Rely on your talking points and key issues.
- Tell your story – personalising the issues will help get your message across. Try and present your information as clearly and succinctly as possible and avoid being aggressive or abusive.
- It is okay if you don't know the answer to everything that is asked. If possible, indicate that you will provide further information following the meeting.
- Don't forget to ask for a commitment. Remember why you are there and try not to get sidetracked.
- Remember to leave any material that you have prepared beforehand.

AFTER THE MEETING

Write to thank your MP for making the time to meet with you, and reiterate why the meeting was important to you.

Follow up any outstanding action. If you agreed to provide additional information, make sure you provide that within a reasonable time frame. If you were promised additional information, then follow this up (confirm that you are expecting to receive additional information in your thank you letter).

[Write to NCC](#) and let us know how the meeting went: ncc@nature.org.au

Talking Points

Consider whether you would like to talk about any of the following issues:

- **A LOCAL EXAMPLE**

Is there an area of bushland in your area that has not been adequately protected? What natural values were lost? How did the laws fail to protect those values?

- **BIODIVERSITY IN NSW**

You may want to raise the following points about biodiversity in NSW:

- Over the last 200 years NSW has experienced a marked decline in biodiversity with over 100 plant and animal species becoming extinct. [Source: NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Saving NSW threatened species webpage, www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies]
- Currently over 989 species of plants and animals, 49 populations and 107 ecological communities are threatened with extinction in NSW. Between 2009 and 2012 an additional 35 species were listed as threatened. [Source: *NSW State of the Environment Report 2012*, Environmental Protection Authority]
- Koalas are at risk of extinction in parts of NSW unless there is a better commitment to maintaining their habitat. They are listed as vulnerable to extinction in NSW and Queensland because their populations have declined by 42 per cent in the past 20 years. The major cause of the koala's decline is land clearing.
- Strong protections against land clearing also provide an abundance of other economic benefits, including providing shelter for stock and crops from wind and weather; pest control and pollination; health and recreation benefits; climate moderation; and protection from erosion, waterlogging and salinity.
- Figures from the NSW Auditor General's office, analysed by WWF-Australia¹ found that 116,000 native mammals have avoided death due to agricultural clearing each year since the introduction of the NVA.

- **REFORM PROCESS**

You may want to update the MP on the current reform process:

- In June 2014 the NSW Government commissioned an Independent Panel to conduct a review of the *Native Vegetation Act (2003) (NVA)*, *Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995) (TSC Act)*, *Nature Conservation Trust Act (2001) (NCT Act)* and parts of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPWS Act)*.
- The Panel released an Issues Paper in August 2014 and undertook stakeholder engagement and community consultation.
- The Panel delivered its final report and 43 recommendations to Government on 18 December 2014.
- On 26 March 2015 the Government announced it would implement all of the Panel's 43 recommendations. The Government anticipates a draft exposure bill by November 2015.

¹ WWF-Australia: Native wildlife at risk if NSW Native Vegetation Act is repealed, available at: http://awsassets.wwf.org.au/downloads/fl017_native_wildlife_at_risk_9apr15.pdf

- **KEY CHANGES TO BIODIVERSITY LAWS**

You may want to outline the key changes to biodiversity laws:

- The Government will repeal the *Native Vegetation Act (2003) (NVA)*, *Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995) (TSC Act)*, *Nature Conservation Trust Act (2001) (NCT Act)* and parts of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPWS Act)*.
- The Government will introduce a new *Biodiversity Conservation Act*.
- Land clearing will now require development consent under Part 4 the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. This will apply uniformly across the State (including urban and coastal areas) and to all types of development (e.g. agricultural, major projects, urban development). This will mean there is an increased role for local councils (as consent authorities) for assessing and determining land clearing applications.
- Some agricultural land management activities will be regulated by the Local Land Services as either exempt or code based activities. Some code based activities will require notification or certification.
- The Government will undertake vegetation mapping of the entire state and classify all land into three different categories: Category 1 – low conservation value grasslands (no approval required); Category 2 – important vegetation (LLS Act or EPA Act applies); and Category 3 – protected areas (cannot be developed)
- Existing processes for biodiversity assessment, biodiversity offsetting, biodiversity banking and bio-certification will be consolidated into one single biodiversity assessment methodology that will apply to all development under the EPA Act.

- **KEY ISSUES**

You might want to discuss some of the key issues and concerns for biodiversity protection, including:

- Biodiversity Offsetting
- “No-go” zones for protecting high conservation areas
- Self-assessable codes for agricultural land management activities
- Vegetation Mapping
- Monitoring and enforcement
- Strategic regional planning
- Private land conservation

Further information on these key issues is available on our website:

www.nature.org.au/NewDealForNature

AVAILABLE MATERIAL (YOU CAN LEAVE A COPY WITH YOUR MP)

The following material is available to download at www.nature.org.au/NewDealForNature

- [A New Deal for Nature](#)
- [Briefing Note - Biodiversity Legislation Review](#)