

Cumberland plain terms of reference feedback

I am greatly concerned at the decline in Cumberland Plain habitat. It seems that the **current offset policy is unable to result in an overall net benefit** and in fact is enabling habitat destruction. It is vitally important that **offsets only occur as a last resort**, that they are **local (within 5km)** and that they also **do not allow offsets in spaces already preserved under other legislation (like council reserves)**.

I believe **stronger individual tree preservation rules** should also be implemented, as there is so little of the Cumberland plain left, even these few isolated trees at least keep the diversity of the individual species alive, and provide a seed bank which can be collected for further habitat restoration. There is a lot of development going on in the Macarthur and Wilton areas that are needlessly removing trees, when a more forgiving design could preserve them. Developers even seem to actively route roads to go over existing trees as a justification for then cutting them down.

In terms of the environment, it is **important to ensure that Community values and feedback is also taken into account, and actively included in plans**. Local people have invaluable knowledge, their feedback needs to be sought, taken into account and responded to, **including full public explanations if decisions are made against the identified community conservation priorities**.

Currently there is **no incentive for developers to think outside the box** - for example, there is no driver to make them think of alternatives to urban sprawl. There **may be some creative solutions** which involve small village style developments with 3-5 storey buildings and strongly preserved habitat between them that would be more effective. The **plan should incentivise such creative thinking**, because it is getting pretty desperate. **Compulsory acquisition of currently land banked areas prior to rezoning should also be considered** – developers have taken a risk at speculative rezoning, there is no obligation on government to honour that risk and deliver 100% of what developers ask. It is important that the Environment and the Community start taking a front row seat. At the moment **individual developments are being approved with no check of the overall cumulative impact**, or the amount of habitat remaining. It is essential for this trend to be reversed to enable progress in protecting habitat types to be made. **Stronger wording, firm, measurable targets and active oversight of the big picture are required** to achieve net benefit and effective conservation of this endangered habitat type.

Please modify the terms of reference to strongly address all of my concerns raised above.