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The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 10/50 Clearing Code of Practice. The code follows new legislation which enables land owners in a Clearing Entitlement Area to clear trees and vegetation within 10 metres of residential habitable accommodation, and vegetation other than trees within 50 metres.

The main purpose of The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association over its 50 year life has been to preserve and protect bushland, open space, parks and reserves in the Municipality of Mosman. Protection of the integrity and biodiversity of the native flora and fauna is one of its principal objectives.

#### **10/50 Clearing Entitlement Areas Map**

While the map of the 10/50 Clearing Entitlement Areas remains unavailable it is difficult to determine the relevance of the code to a particular locality. However we assume that the code will apply to urban areas where there is bushland, including Mosman.

#### **Code should protect life and property while maximising protection of the environment**

The Association acknowledges that a Rural Fire Service Code of Practice must protect life and property. However it should do so in a way that maximises protection of the environment.

**Self assessment is likely to result in unnecessary clearing that will have a detrimental affect on biodiversity.** The legal obligations to protect vegetation under 7.8 of the 10/50 Code will not provide optimum vegetation protection.

#### **Key threatening processes**

In order to conserve species it is necessary to consider "key threatening processes" defined as "processes that threaten or may threaten the survival, abundance or evolutionary development of a native species or ecological community".

Remnant urban bushland plays a vital role in preserving species.

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It provides corridors so that flora and fauna can migrate. In an urban area these corridors can be large (Sydney Harbour National Park), of more moderate size (municipal bushland areas) or they can be small areas of native vegetation on unformed roads and in pocket parks. Where there are no directly connecting corridors, **links can be provided by vegetation on private land and through tree canopies.**

### **Factors that may cause unnecessary clearing**

1. An understandable fear of bush fire. Expert assessment and advice should be obtained. Individual land holders may not have the knowledge to assess the danger of fire in their individual circumstance. The fire risk may be low or the native vegetation may be low risk. There may be alternative bush fire management measures which could be undertaken.

2. Private property owners may not have the knowledge to assess the species and habitat values on their land and how they will be affected by clearing.

3. In urban areas such as Mosman some property owners appear to value harbour views more highly than biodiversity. The new code of practice could be used as an excuse to remove trees and vegetation that impede views. Not only will biodiversity be threatened but the visual value of the locality as viewed from the harbour will be compromised.

4. A land owner may pressurise neighbouring land owners, public or private, to clear vegetation if the neighbouring vegetation comes within 10m or 50m of his/her accommodation.

### **Other adverse effects**

1. Mosman Council has had a policy of preserving and enhancing biodiversity on both public and private land. The self assessment allowed by the 10/50 Code is likely to make implementation of this strategy problematic.

**2. The cooling effect of trees and vegetation are a mitigating factor in a period of increasing risk of bush fire due to climate change.**

- The ability of trees and vegetation to produce oxygen and remove CO<sub>2</sub> is accepted.
- In an urban environment, trees and vegetation provide a social benefit as they cool a built environment.

**Recommendations**

1. The map of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Entitlement Areas should be made public prior to the Code being finalised, so that the public is aware of its implications.
2. Qualified assessment of environmental factors such as threatened and vulnerable species and the value of the vegetation as habitat should also be sought and taken into account.
3. Clearing under the 10/50 Code should not take place without an assessment and advice from the RFS about possible alternatives to vegetation clearance.
4. Removal of vegetation should be reported to the RFS and to the municipal authority. They need to be aware of vegetation conditions as they plan for bush fire management.



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