



# STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

8 August 2020

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Dear Sirs

## Re Vegetation Mapping Options, Item 6 General Meeting 12 August 2020

### STEP strongly supports option 2.

STEP Inc is a local community-based environmental group, with a membership of over 400 in the northern Sydney area. Our main objective is to preserve natural bushland in northern Sydney from alienation or degradation and ensuring proper management of this bushland. Our group has considerable experience in environmental issues and regenerating and preserving natural bushland and native vegetation.

### We support Option 2 as it:

1. **Provides the most accurate planning tool** because all vegetation communities are included without distinction. Option 1 would exclude the vegetation communities of lesser conservation significance and Option 3 gives lesser protection to the vegetation communities of lesser conservation significance.
2. **Gives long term certainty to the HLEP 2013 Terrestrial Biodiversity Map.** It is likely that vegetation communities will change status (common to endangered to critically endangered or local to regional), over the life of the HLEP. Change of status will not affect the HLEP if all vegetation communities are given equal status now.
3. **Provides accuracy and long-term certainty** that will enable Council to plan with certainty long into the future without extra cost.
4. **Gives proper value to widespread vegetation communities.** According to Smith and Smith 2008, these communities, all on Hawkesbury Sandstone, include:
  - a. Peppermint-Angophora Forest
  - b. Bloodwood-Scribbly Gum Woodland
  - c. Narrow-leaved Scribbly Gum Woodland
  - d. Grey Gum-Scribbly Gum Woodland
  - e. Yellow Bloodwood Woodland
  - f. Scribbly Gum Open-woodland/Heath

These communities contain most of the biodiversity in the Shire because they are so widespread. To downgrade them, because they are not rare or 'significant', is to

ignore the conservation requirements of most of Hornsby's fauna, both sedentary and migratory.

These common vegetation communities are also some of the most beloved in the Shire. They produce stunning flower displays and grow on spectacular rugged landscapes.

## **Concerns about Option 2**

### **Landholders**

STEP understands that there are some concerns from landholders with mapped vegetation communities on their properties. STEP believes that the changes in development procedures will not be significantly altered.

Properties affected will mostly, but not entirely, be rural properties. Most of these properties have cleared upper areas on the ridges with the mapped vegetation being on the steep Hawkesbury Sandstone at the rear of the property. Development on cleared areas will be unaffected by this vegetation mapping as the Exempt and Complying Development Code still applies to these cleared areas.

Development in, and close to the bushland, is already constrained as most of it is either Bushfire Prone Land, Category 1 or Bushfire Prone Land Buffer, 100m and 30m. Land that falls into these categories already needs a DA and consultation with the Rural Fire Service.

Where Exempt and Complying Development is not possible the DA procedure is still available.

### **Council**

Council also seems to be concerned about the implications of changes to planning processes with the adoption of Option 2. STEP does not believe that Council will be inundated with costly DA applications for the reasons listed above; Exempt and Complying Development will apply in many already cleared areas and DAs are already needed in Bushfire prone land.

STEP would like to see Hornsby remain "The Bushland Shire" and believe that adoption of Option 2 enables protection of the bushland and sympathetic development.

Yours faithfully,



Jill Green  
President

Smith and Smith, Ecological Consultants, Native Vegetation Communities of Hornsby Shire, 2008 Update

[https://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/\\_resources/documents/environment/indigenous-trees/Native-Vegetation-Communities-2008-Update.pdf](https://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/_resources/documents/environment/indigenous-trees/Native-Vegetation-Communities-2008-Update.pdf)