



Department of Environment,
Land, Water & Planning

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Ms Wendy Matthews
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Ref: MIN027396



Dear Ms Matthews

PROTECTION OF FARRELL WETLAND

Thank you for your email of 6 February 2017 to the Minister for Industry, Employment and Resources, the Hon Wade Noonan MP about protection of Farrell Wetland at Giffard. As this issue is the responsibility of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, your correspondence has been forwarded for consideration and response. The Minister has asked that I respond on her behalf. I commend you for your interest in protecting your local environment.

Officers of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) have conducted a desktop assessment of the property containing Farrell Wetland based on existing information about its biodiversity values and local knowledge of the area.

The property and the local area have a range of biodiversity values from remnant vegetation and the presence of native plants and animals. It is adjacent to the Giffard Bushland Reserve and, with adjacent properties, forms part of a link of more or less continuous native vegetation from the Mullungdung State Forest to the coast near Seaspray.

The property is mapped as supporting three Ecological Vegetation Classes - Sedge Wetland and Lowland Forest/Heathy Woodland Mosaic, which are regarded as locally vulnerable, and Heathy Woodland, which is locally common. Most of the southern section of the property is pasture. There are no records of threatened species recorded on department databases from the property itself, but this probably reflects a lack of survey. Three threatened animal species are recorded within about 3 km of the property; Lace Monitor, White-bellied Sea Eagle and Southern Toadlet. No threatened plants are recorded close by. Farrell Wetland is not itself listed in the *Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*, however several wetlands in the broader area are listed including Jack Smith Lake and Wellington Wetlands.

The department has a process to assess land for purchase and the property will be considered for assessment if it comes on the market. However, there is no dedicated fund for land purchase and the department would have to identify funds from within its existing budget to purchase. Generally land purchases to add to the public conservation estate are only made for areas of exceptional value and our initial assessment suggests that this property would not meet this criterion.

However, there are other mechanisms that are currently in place, or can be applied, to protect the values of the wetland. The native vegetation regulations place significant restrictions on clearing of native vegetation on private land. Local government (in this case Wellington Shire) administer these regulations as part of the planning scheme and given the extent of the native vegetation and the

existence of the wetland it is unlikely that a landowner would receive permission to do further extensive clearing.

Other agencies may also be interested in protecting the values of the wetland. Trust for Nature (TfN) has a 'revolving fund' for land purchase and resale with a conservation covenant. Initial discussions with local representatives of Trust for Nature indicates they may be interested in this property should it come on the market. The location of the property has been passed to the local TfN manager, Robyn Edwards. Robyn can be contacted on telephone 51 530457.

Many private buyers are also keen to purchase land with high natural values and manage it for conservation and I would encourage you to make the virtues of the property known to people who may be interested.

If you have further questions, please call Stephen Henry, the DELWP Biodiversity Program Manager for Gippsland on telephone 51 611 366 or 0428 530 373 and email stephen.henry@delwp.vic.gov.au.

Thank you for raising this matter with the Minister.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Chapple
Regional Director, Gippsland

28/03/2017