



TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE INC



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THREATENED SPECIES DUMPED FOR DEVELOPER RULES

Key environment groups today attacked proposals by the Keneally government to pave the way for developers to destroy populations of threatened species under the controversial biocertification scheme.

The scheme which is required by legislation to 'maintain or improve' the environment was supposed to follow the 'like for like' principle through offsets so that if a development would harm a threatened species population it could be offset by improved protection of the same species elsewhere. This has now been comprehensively abandoned so that an endangered frog or bird or reptile can be offset by a tree somewhere else in the state.

"This is scandalous and Frank Sartor must withdraw the proposal if he wants to retain any semblance of environmental integrity. Clearly anti-environmental government ministers and developers have got at this scheme which will trash the government's recent steps to green its image. To suggest a threatened frog or bird or reptile species could be offset by some trees elsewhere in the state makes a nonsense of the 'maintain or improve' principle that was supposed to be enshrined in the legislation," said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of Total Environment Centre.

Pepe Clarke, Chief Executive Officer of the Nature Conservation Council said: "Offsetting the environmental impacts from a development was already a controversial idea. This new proposal will increase the anger felt by all those environmental and community groups who have watched the government progressively weaken planning laws in favour of developers."

Kevin Evans, Executive Officer of the National Parks Association of NSW said: "A key principle in any offsetting is 'like for like'. This new scheme is nowhere near this. Environment groups will be appealing to the next federal environment minister to reject this scheme as part of any alignment of commonwealth and state threatened species laws. The feds will have to intervene every time if any national threatened species are involved."

Advice from lawyers at the Environmental Defenders Office who have reviewed the scheme and recently confirmed the changes with the environment department has also revealed other serious weaknesses in the biocertification scheme.

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