



# Friends of Grasslands

*supporting native grassy ecosystems*

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## **Re. Have your say on *Agriculture, land and emissions Discussion Paper***

Friends of Grasslands (FOG) is a community group dedicated to the conservation of natural temperate grassy ecosystems in south-eastern Australia. FOG advocates, educates and advises on matters to do with the conservation of native grassy ecosystems, and carries out surveys and other on-ground work. FOG is based in Canberra and its members include professional scientists, landowners, land managers and interested members of the public.

The above Discussion Paper explains the forthcoming Agriculture and Land Sector Plan will focus on emissions from activities in agriculture and on the land, including by considering options associated with activity on public and private lands, and lands held by Indigenous people.

Given the climate crisis, a focus on avoiding the release of greenhouse gas emissions and on removing and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere is understandable.

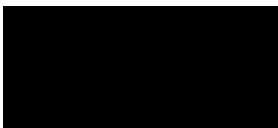
Although reference is made to 'Biodiversity as part of the solution', both the Paper and the Australian Government's current Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme are too carbon-focussed, *at the expense of* biodiversity.

- The current list of active 'Opportunities for the land sector' promote afforestation; however, afforestation is not always appropriate; of concern to FOG is the ongoing loss of native grasslands. This must stop.
- In the agriculture sector, carbon storage is incentivised through measures like improved fertiliser application and modifications to grazing practices such as the de-stocking of drought affected land. While useful, there is so much more to effective land management.

Better outcomes overall, including carbon outcomes, would be achieved by giving greater consideration of landscape-scale, ecologically-informed land management on both farm and non-farm land. A single-minded focus on carbon will generally have negative impacts water availability and ecosystems' exposure to fire. There is not a single reference cited in the Discussion Paper that gives any consideration to integrating and simultaneously achieving both carbon and biodiversity outcomes.

I encourage you to address this to a greater extent in the Agriculture and Land Sector Plan.

Yours sincerely



Professor Jamie Pittock  
President, Friends of Grasslands  
13 December 2023