



EDO NSW  
ABN 72 002 880 864  
Level 5, 263 Clarence Street  
Sydney NSW 2000 AUSTRALIA  
E: edonsw@edonsw.org.au  
W: www.edonsw.org.au  
T: + 61 2 9262 6989  
F: + 61 2 9264 2412

## Will you help us to save your EDO?

After nearly 30 years of helping the people of NSW to protect their environment and heritage under the law, EDO NSW faces an unprecedented threat to its survival and we need your help to ensure we can continue to assist you in public interest environmental matters. *Please read on to better understand the problem and what you can do to help.*

### **POLITICAL PRESSURE**

In recent days, the NSW Energy Minister attacked EDO NSW's involvement in last weekend's community conference in Gloucester. The conference provided an opportunity for community members to obtain information on developments across NSW and was attended by farmers, elected representatives and the broader community. This latest comment follows months of repeated attacks in *The Australian* newspaper, the National Civic Council and in NSW Parliament, mainly by Shooters and Fishers Party MPs. These are unjustified attacks on our work as lawyers for the environment. [Click here](#) to see our letter of October 19<sup>th</sup> 2012 to NSW Government Ministers and MPs responding to these attacks.

### **FUNDING CRISIS**

The NSW Government is now being urged to stop EDO NSW funding under a review of legal assistance services. At the same time, the major source of our annual funding - which comes from the Public Purpose Fund of the Law Society of NSW (PPF) - has been cut. We have been receiving PPF funding since 1996,

normally under three-year grant agreements, and our work has been actively supported by the Trustees. The first cut was to 6 months (July-December 2012); and as of this month has been reduced to only 3 months (January-March 2013), with the dollar value cut by a quarter. As a result, both our PPF funding, and NSW Government funding, must now be considered at risk.

## **THE PROBLEM**

This damaging uncertainty makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to maintain a strong, independent EDO, that can offer ongoing help to clients, and serve the wider community, while operating free of the politics of the day. If our PPF funding is not restored and public funding affirmed then EDO NSW as you know it will be decimated if not destroyed in the New Year. This is occurring at the same time as the Government is pursuing its signature reform of the planning laws, with the avowed intention of restoring community participation and public confidence after the dark days of fast-tracking major projects under Part 3A.

## **THE SOLUTION**

The uncertainty can be solved by the NSW Government making clear its strong and unambiguous support for ongoing PPF and public funding of EDO NSW, ideally with cross-party agreement in the Parliament. In this way, community participation and public confidence in the planning and environment system can be maintained.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

We need our many supporters to speak up long and loud. Please do any or all of the following:

- Contact your local Member of Parliament to call for their support to save EDO NSW, and to express your support. You can find contacts for your local MP

at: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/members.nsf/V3Home>  
[e](#)

- Contact the Premier ([office@premier.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@premier.nsw.gov.au) or ph: (02) 9487 8588), the Attorney General the Hon. Greg Smith ([office@smith.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@smith.minister.nsw.gov.au) or ph: (02) 9228 5246) and the Minister for Planning & Infrastructure the Hon. Brad Hazzard MP ([office@hazzard.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@hazzard.minister.nsw.gov.au) or ph: (02) 9228 5258)
- Speak to your local media and look for opportunities to support us such as calling in to radio talkback
- Share this email with anyone you think might care about EDO NSW.
- We also welcome your donations to [EDO NSW](#)

## **OUR FUTURE**

If the current situation goes unchanged, it means we will have to lay off most of our valuable, highly professional and tireless staff early in the New Year, and begin dramatically scaling back or shutting down our popular key community services including:

- Free legal advice telephone line – we took nearly 1500 calls last year
- Community workshops – 95 across NSW in the past three years, with about 95% in rural and regional areas
- Rural and regional work – a major focus for the past 10 years, with a regional office in Lismore, and support to communities on key issues like native vegetation, water plans, coal seam gas, mining, private conservation and local planning
- Indigenous program – unique support to the Aboriginal community on culture and heritage
- Education and publishing – major guides/handbooks, and 40 much-used Fact Sheets, and a major new guide on mining set to be published
- Policy and law reform – including extensive input to the current major reform of the NSW planning laws, with 2400 hits on our online guide to the Green Paper during the submission period
- Court cases and mediation – ensuring high quality cases get heard and those with poor prospects are filtered out, which has led to many

important environment cases on behalf of communities from the cities to the bush

If NSW loses its EDO, the community's only source of accessible, independent, expert, public interest legal advice on planning and environment matters since 1985 will disappear.

If that alarms you, then please take a stand. Help us to save your EDO.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jeff Smith', written in a cursive style.

Jeff Smith, Executive Director

P.S. We are trying to reach as many EDO NSW supporters as possible so our apologies if you receive this email more than once. Thank you for taking the time to make your voice heard for your EDO.

**Address:** Level 5, 263 Clarence St, Sydney NSW 2000

**Phone:** 02 9262 6989

**Email:** [edonsw@edonsw.org.au](mailto:edonsw@edonsw.org.au)

**Website:** [edonsw.org.au](http://edonsw.org.au)

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