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## **Brigalow and Nandewar State Conservation Areas - Actively managing for better ecological outcomes**

The Natural Resources Commission has released its final report on actively managing cypress forests in the State Conservation Areas in the Brigalow and Nandewar Community Conservation Area.

The Commission's spatial analysis identified large areas of dense vegetation covering around 15 percent of the State Conservation Areas. The Commission found that while small patches of dense vegetation can provide beneficial habitat for native animals and plants, large stands of dense vegetation can impact the ecological health of these forests.

The Commission's Executive Director, Bryce Wilde, explains that "these forests are very different to the old growth forests found on the coast and ranges in NSW, and as a result need very different management regimes. Reserve managers need to be pro-actively managing large stands of dense vegetation to improve environmental outcomes, particularly as cypress density is likely to increase in the future."

The Commission's final recommendations outline a number of proposed reforms to improve the management of State Conservation Areas in the Brigalow and Nandewar region. In particular, the Commission recommends that a range of active management tools, including ecological thinning, are made available to land managers to address large stands of dense vegetation that are impacting ecological values. Use of these tools should be guided by new management plans for the Brigalow and Nandewar State Conservation Areas that are developed in line with contemporary best practice adaptive management practices.

Mr Wilde emphasises that the Commission's recommendations "place the ecological health of these forests first and foremost." However, the Commission also recognises that active management for ecological outcomes can incur significant costs. Mr Wilde advises that "the Government should look for new ways to off-set management costs, so that these much-needed active management programs are financially sustainable and better able to deliver improved environmental outcomes in the long term. In this case, residues from ecological thinning provide a practical means to recover some of the costs of environmental management, and also provide secondary benefits to local communities."

The Commission's findings and recommendations have been informed by public submissions and consultation with relevant industry, Aboriginal, environment and community groups.

The final report, supporting map book and public submissions are available on the NRC's website:

<http://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/active-management-cypress-forests-brigalow-nandewar>

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