



**Submission to the
NSW Natural Resources Commission**

Draft report on the

**Active and adaptive cypress management in the Brigalow and
Nandewar State Conservation Areas June 2014**

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NSW Farmers' Association Background

The NSW Farmers' Association (the Association) is Australia's largest State farmer organisation representing the interests of its farmer members – ranging from broad acre, Livestock, wool and grain producers, to more specialised producers in the horticulture, dairy, egg, poultry, pork, oyster and goat industries.

The draft report

NSW Farmers appreciates the opportunity to comment on the NSW Natural Resources Commission (NRC)'s draft report - active and adaptive cypress management in the Brigalow and Nandewar State Conservation Areas of June 2014 (the draft report).

NSW Farmers supports the NRC's findings that active management interventions such as ecological thinning and targeted grazing in combination with controlled burning and pest management can maintain and enhance environmental outcomes of the forests within the Community Conservation Area (SCA).

NSW Farmers also supports the NRC's recommendation that the NSW Government should seek secondary commercial benefits, as appropriate, to off-set costs, improve long term sustainability of the program and deliver social and economic benefits.

As stated in the NSW Farmers submission to the terms of reference in 2013, NSW Farmers are of the belief that environmental outcomes can be increased because of active management practices, and we welcome exploration of instances where mutually beneficial outcomes may be achieved.

NSW Farmers' submission

In order to compare the draft report to earlier versions, and raise future concerns, below is a reiteration of the main points raised from our membership on this issue:

- Any analysis needs to properly understand the baseline biodiversity value of the SCA before the reduction in adaptive management activities occurred. This will then go some way to demonstrating either a decline or an increase in those values. However, we would strongly suggest these values would have declined due to the increase in woody weeds in particular.
- A member has indicated to us that when the consultation process in relation to the management of the Pilliga Scrub occurred in the late 90s and early 2000s, the Forestry Department at that time presented the community with results of surveys done that compared managed (thinned) forests, with areas untreated. It has been reported to us that the managed forest maintained a major increase in biodiversity including a koala population estimated at the time to be around 50,000.
- Members have also indicated to us that there are certain strains of ironbark species which are recognised koala habitat, well known to loggers and usually retained as a result. There is considerable concern that the woody weed undergrowth is delivering adverse environmental outcomes in terms of the growth and retention of these trees.
- The effects of having thick stands of cypress that are locked up without any management activities have been continually highlighted to us. Farmers regularly report smaller tree sizes and increased number of feral pests, combined with a decline in native wildlife and no useful groundcover.
- As highlighted above, it is important to have a thorough understanding of the socio-economic impacts. The town of Gwabegar, for instance, has been essentially ruined since the closure of their mill, which employed 22 people. The people that do remain in this small town are increasingly welfare dependant leading to a number of social problems. The story is somewhat similar in Baradine

when their hardwood mill closed. It employed 20 people. The economic effects of these closures are also felt in nearby towns such as Coonabarabran.

- There does remain one business in particular that continues to undertake timber milling work in Baradine and Gunnedah. That business employs over 50 people, however it is felt that unless areas within the National Parks and Wildlife Service controlled forest are made available for logging these mills will close in the next year or so, due to lack of suitable saw logs.

Generally, NSW Farmers are of the view that the NRC's report has accommodated these considerations in the key recommendations and in particular recommendation 1(a), 2(a) and 4(a). In terms of recommendation 2(b), NSW Farmers is supportive of the opportunity for use of spatial data technologies in monitoring, evaluation and reporting in the Adaptive Management Plans, and appreciates the linkages to spatial data in terms of seeking measurable targets and outcomes.

Summary and key findings

NSW Farmers is generally supportive of the comprehensive analysis of the State Conservation Area undertaken by the NRC, and are supportive of the NRC's road map to achieving workable solutions to a wide variety of issues occurring simultaneously. In general, NSW Farmers are supportive of the adaptive and active approach to landscape management, and welcome innovative approaches to often complex conditions and emerging landscape issues.

NSW Farmers supports the NRC's recommendation for the expansion of the National Parks and Wildlife Regional Advisory Committees to include expertise in adaptive management. We believe this will allow more efficiently the likelihood of achieving outcomes favourable to all and on a triple bottom line basis, even where legal advice indicates that the primary purpose of the activity must be for the environmental outcome. NSW Farmers firmly believes in the maximisation of instances where mutual benefits for both the environment and socio-economic conditions can be sustained.