

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
ASSESSMENT OF CYPRESS FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE BRIGALOW AND  
NANDEWAR STATE CONSERVATION AREAS**

**SUBMISSION ON TERMS OF REFERENCE BY THE NATIONAL PARKS  
ASSOCIATION OF NSW (NPA)**

NPA wishes to thank the Natural Resources Commission for the opportunity to provide comment in relation to the Terms of Reference in relation to the assessment of Cypress Forest Management In The Brigalow And Nandewar State Conservation Areas which it is conducting at the request of the NSW Government.

NPA has a deep interest in this assessment and the proper management of the significant natural lands which are the subject of the assessment. NPA, along with a wide range of other community groups, campaigned for a considerable time to achieve reservation of these lands in bioregions which had a relatively low level of formal conservation reserves prior to the Brigalow Belt and Nandewar Community Conservation Area Act 2005.

**Reservation Status**

The conservation reserves which are the subject of the assessment are dedicated as part of the under the Brigalow Belt and Nandewar Community Conservation Area Act 2005. Each reserve was classed within a zoning, prescribing a particular reservation status under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The Zone 3 lands which are the subject of this assessment are reserved as State Conservation Areas (SCA) under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. It is NPAs contention that the primary reason for identification of these lands as Zone 3 SCA and not either National Parks or Nature Reserves is due to a perception that these lands may contain minerals or gas or coal reserves. SCA lands are in a holding pattern whilst mineral resources are confirmed or otherwise and subject to a 5 yearly review. A review of these particular lands was conducted in 2011.

**Costs and Benefits**

The Terms of Reference state that the NRC should consider:

- current social and economic impacts and benefits of the “forest” and future social and economic values under different adaptive and active management options and processes.

NPA is concerned that this Term of Reference is worded in a way which implies that commercial logging of the State Conservation Areas is being contemplated.

These are conservation reserves which are on hold for future upgrading to National Park or Nature Reserve status. The use of the term ‘forest’ rather than reserve is code for the Government seeking a loophole whereby these reserves could be open for logging operations.

It is implicit in the wording that any active or adaptive management process would have economic benefits, but not costs. NPA believes that the costs of the types of management apparently being contemplated would outweigh any return to the Government.

NPA is opposed to commercial logging in these reserves and urges that they be upgraded to National Park or Nature Reserve status at the earliest possible opportunity.

### Management Issues

Management of cypress pine in the context of reserved land in the Brigalow Belt South and Nandewar bioregions has parallels with management of invasive native species on private land under the Native Vegetation Act.

Management processes, controls and ecological considerations should be consistent for mechanisms operating on reserved land and private land. In particular tests to assess whether actions result in maintenance or improvement in ecological condition ought to be applied on a consistent basis.

Management of invasive native-scrub is considered less ecologically unacceptable when fire is used as the primary mechanism for control; when selective thinning is used and when soil disturbance is minimised. These mechanisms should be those applied in relation to any proposed active or adaptive management trial in the State Conservation Areas under consideration.

In particular any trial should involve the use of fire as a tool to achieve stand thinning in addition to plots where timber removal is the tool.

### Community Involvement

The Brigalow Belt and Nandewar Community Conservation Area Act 2005 provided for the establishment of Community Conservation Advisory Committees (CCAC). NPA did not support this structure as it is NPAs view that the existing Regional Advisory Committees under the National Parks and Wildlife Act is the appropriate mechanism for community involvement in reserve management planning.

The parallel process set up by the Brigalow Belt and Nandewar Community Conservation Area Act 2005 is inefficient and a drain on Government resources.

Nevertheless NPA is concerned that the CCACs have not met in recent times.

There needs to be an effective and well resourced community advisory committee system in place to ensure an accountable public review mechanism. Our preference would be for this to be done through the established Regional Advisory Committees.

In addition any scientific research conducted to support the trial should provide reports to an independent scientific peer review panel. Reports from that panel should be provided to the relevant Advisory Committee and be publicly available.

### Status of Management Plans

The CCACs were working with departmental staff to complete draft plans of management for the reserves which are not subject to this adaptive and active management assessment process.

It is important that these plans be finalised as a priority of Government. Any management actions should be consistent with the aims, objects and actions contained within these draft plans.

No action should be taken which would detract from the significance values identified for each of the reserves.

NPA will be compiling information from its records relating the significance of each of the reserves which are the subject of this assessment. This information will be conveyed to the Commission in a timely way.

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