

Restoring Nature and Enhancing Value for Landholders
Managing and Protecting Critically Endangered Ecological Communities
Natural Resources Commission
Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte and Executives
c/- nrc@nrc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Professor Durrant-Whyte and Executives,

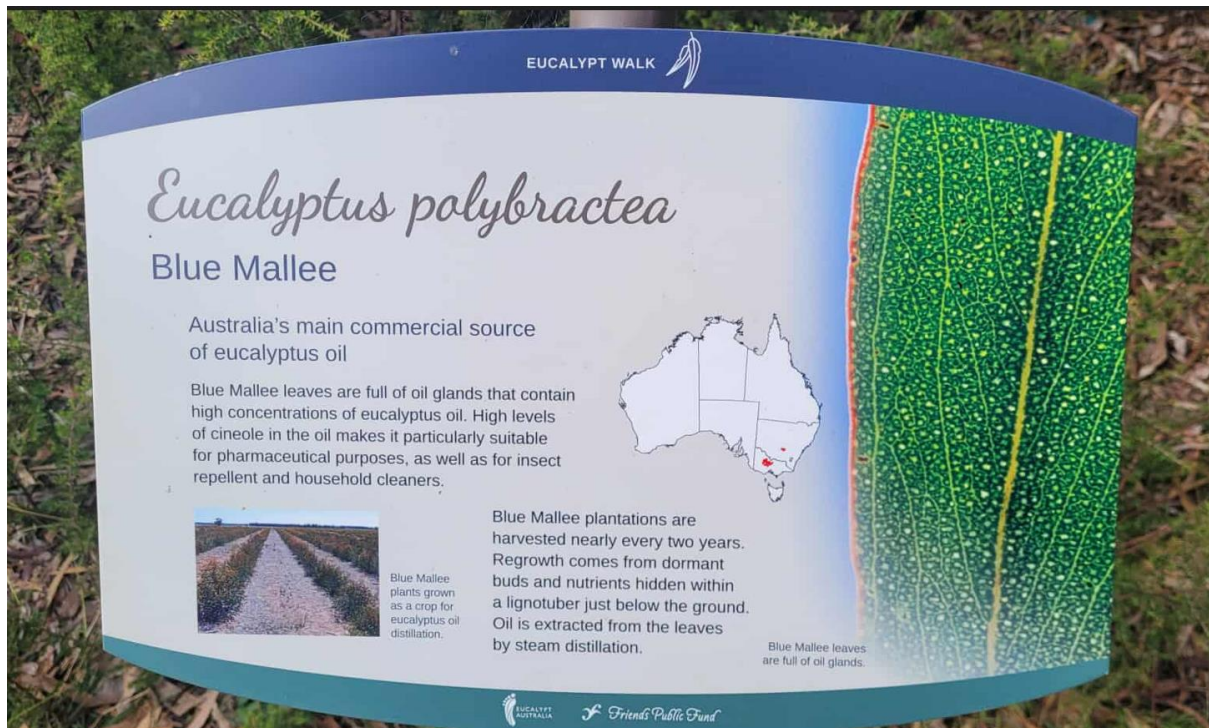
We are writing as members of the Landholders Right to Farm group, to document some of the current injustices occurring in our area of West Wyalong, in the Bland shire, in rural NSW in relation to “Managing and Protecting Critically Endangered Ecological Communities” and the impact it is having on us as farmers, whose land and livelihoods have been stolen, with no notice and no compensation. The Landholders Right to Farm group includes around 40 families in our district, including farmers and members of the eucalyptus and broombush industries. We deeply appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to this review, and thank members of the Commission who visited our area recently to take verbal submissions.

We are bewildered by the incorrect and inaccurate mapping of parts of our multi-generational farms, under NSW State government’s Part 5A of the Local Land Services Act, which has essentially confiscated large parts of them, and/or prosecuted some of us for illegal land clearing, all without consultation. The risk is that land zoned “pink” will be at risk of neglect, being overtaken by pests and invasive species, and ultimately destroyed, if the government simply locks it away, without a proper vegetation management plan and people to look after this valuable resource. Having cared for our vegetation for years, it is as though we are being punished for good behaviour, in comparison to other farmers whose bushland has long been cleared, and do not suffer this level of interference about they manage their farms.

Eucalyptus oil is an iconic Australian product and we are proud to be part of a sustainable, green industry that has an ecological niche in our district. Here is a representation of our local Eucalyptus and Broombush industries and some of our produce



Eucalyptus oil is celebrated nationally, as shown in this photo of a sign in front of a small display at the National Botanic Gardens, Canberra, (taken 26th April 2025), of Blue Mallee (*Eucalyptus Polybractea*), featuring part of the plantation on Mt Mulga, West Wyalong. The small red patch in the map is the area of Blue Mallee in West Wyalong – the topic of this submission. Note the vegetation is not mentioned as critically endangered here, but as “Australia’s main commercial source of eucalyptus oil” - part of a national industry. Our question is: how can an iconic industry that is celebrated by the national Botanic Gardens, be threatened with destruction by the NSW State government?



Above: *Eucalyptus Polybractea* (Blue Mallee) signage at National Botanic Gardens, Canberra, with photo of plantation from Mt Mulga (photo taken 26th April 2025)

People have been practising eucalyptus farming in our district for more than 100 years. There are small stills throughout our area which bear testimony to the many small production enterprises from long ago. The wonderful thing about eucalyptus farming is its sustainability. Eucalyptus grows back every eighteen months, bigger and better than ever (coppicing causes it to tiller out, producing new branches from the lignotuber below ground). The eucalyptus bushland on our farms is thriving, we have many species of wild animals, birds, reptiles and insects, and it is healthier today than ever. This is sustainable farming – not land clearing as is claimed by NSW Govt.

Broombush harvesting is another local industry which has supported many families in our area for years. It is used to make the brush fences that are so popular in urban landscapes. Broombush is harvested by hand, and, like the Blue Mallee, grows back after it is cut, the difference being that it takes around 7 – 8 years to re-grow. The Broombush cutters who come onto our farm to harvest are careful to mosaic harvest – only taking individual bushes and leaving others so the environment is not affected as a whole. It is in their interests to protect the broom bush so that their source of income, and the natural environment which produces it, is protected and sustained.

Some time ago we became aware that our neighbours were being threatened with fines and taken to court for nothing more than continuing in the sustainable farming practices described above, in areas that have been harvested for generations. Knowing nothing about the legislation, it took some time to believe that the state government could take our land in the way they have. Now that we have discovered about the Category 2 Sensitive land regulation in the West Wyalong-Tallimba area, we wish to raise a number of concerns.

- There was no consultation about our land being taken away and our livelihoods put at risk, even though people are still paying for land they now cannot access
- The zoning of areas of land that has been coppiced (harvested) for years was listed as 'critically endangered' in 2010 yet these areas are flourishing today. A review is urgently needed of this classification
- There are significant errors in the mapping that has occurred –
 - areas of cleared land that has been farmed for crops and stock for years is now zoned yellow or pink
 - trees that were planted by farmers that are not native to the area have been zoned yellow
 - parts of the same rows in one plantation are randomly zoned pink or blue – but without clear boundaries we risk prosecution and cannot harvest even the blue parts of the plantation
 - There are inconsistencies in the zoning of natural stands of Blue Mallee which have been harvested for years – parts of some are zoned blue, others yellow or pink – and there are no clear boundaries as to which is which, so none can be harvested without risking prosecution.
 - People have been falsely accused of moving fences or land clearing due to mapping errors
- Local land holders and members of eucalyptus and Broombush industries are not being acknowledged for the good stewardship we have continued to practise, to protect and nurture Blue Mallee and Mallee Broombush

If the government is taking our land, surely there should be compensation, as there is when the government buys farms for national parks or other uses such as NBN towers. As it is, people are paying off the farms, paying rates etc, but have no rights to use the land they have bought in good faith that it was farming land. Those who have harvested this land for years for either Broombush or eucalyptus have their industries at a standstill, livelihoods shattered, families under enormous mental health pressures.

Some farmers are afraid to approach the Dept to review this zoning, as people have had such negative experiences when requesting reviews from the map review team. For instance, even after Local Land Service Officers (LLSOs) submitted a report to the map review team, recommending changes to the zoning on land due to similar errors described above, the map review team completely rejected the LLSO's prepared submission.

In summary, we are most concerned that the NSW State government does not support these two green, iconic Australian industries: eucalyptus oil and broom bush production, and that it has taken land and livelihoods from rural Australians without any explanation, consultation or compensation.

In particular, we request:

- a full review of the classification of our area – whether the blue mallee and mallee broom bush in the so-called 'pink zones' really are critically endangered. Reviewing this old classification is urgent, as so much hinges on this.

- Recognition that coppicing of blue mallee and broom bush cutting is not ‘land clearing’ but is part of “conservation through sustainable use” as recommended by UN Convention on Biodiversity.
- Correcting errors in the mapping, in consultation with landholders and using proper scientific evidence, including on the ground evidence, not only satellite imagery.
- Once the zoning has been reviewed, and mapping errors corrected, we request proper consultation with landholders depending on the new zoning, as to the fate of our farms and how best to nurture and care for the precious resource of Blue Mallee and Mallee Broombush while supporting these sustainable industries.
- Recognition of the good stewardship by local landholders who have protected and nurtured Blue Mallee and Mallee Broombush.
- If, following the review, the government identifies critically endangered communities of native vegetation on privately owned land, then a collaborative process between landholders and the government should be held to enable the best protection of the vegetation and support for eucalyptus and Broombush industries. Some of the options could include, but are not restricted to:
 - Working with landholders, and paying them to continue caring for natural bushland, including working out what is to be preserved in natural state and what can be sustainably harvested (as per ICUN and UN Convention on Biodiversity recommendations).

or

- If the government insists on taking our land and rejects our offer to collaborate, it should purchase the land it takes at higher value than market price, in recognition of the precious value of this resource, with full compensation for the loss of present and future livelihood and ownership of land.

Thank you for considering this submission,

Glenn Seaman and Wendy Bowles

Members of Landholders Right to Farm group