

## Group D - Sample submission

-----Original Message-----

From:  
Sent: None  
To: Felicity Calvert  
Subject: Protect the River Red Gum Forests

Reply-To:

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Dear Natural Resources Commission,

Re: River Red Gum Forest Assessment

The Preliminary Assessment of the River Red Gum Forests of south western NSW, released by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), has highlighted the extreme stress that these internationally significant areas are currently facing. The report paints a bleak future for these forests, predicting that a number of areas will not survive under their current management. The report also discusses the importance of these areas within a landscape context, as the last remnants of vegetation in one of the most heavily cleared landscapes in the country.

However, the assessment falls short of being a credible scientific document, as it fails to address a number of key issues, such as looking at the impact that logging is having on the forests and addressing key, nationally agreed conservation criteria.

The report fails to discuss any negative impacts associated with current logging operations and ignores evidence to this effect from other regions. Indeed, it goes so far as to imply that current management is promoting tree health, but fails to provide any data in support of this assertion. This clashes with the findings of the three year Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) study into Victorian River Red Gum, where logging was of a much lower intensity than what currently occurs in NSW. VEAC found that 'past and current uses and management are seriously affecting the long-term viability of the River Red Gum forests and wetlands'.

The terms of reference for the assessment state that the NRC should take into regard nationally agreed criteria for a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system (JANIS criteria). I do not feel that the assessment has managed to achieve this in its current form as these are not even addressed in the assessment, nor is it shown how

these targets should be achieved. The assessment also fails to outline the well recognised conservation benefits of National Parks. While I applaud the NRC's assertion that reserve design must take into account resilience to climate change, this should in all cases compliment and not replace CAR reserve criteria.

What the report does show very clearly is that the forests are a vulnerable ecosystem, facing extreme water stress. Nationally agreed criteria require that, as such, 60 percent of their remaining extent be reserved. The easiest and most effective means of achieving this is the conversion of the entirety of the River Red Gum State Forest estate to National Park.

The NRC has also thus far failed to adequately consult with Indigenous Traditional Owners in their assessment. I urge the NRC to negotiate with Traditional Owners in regards to the future of the forests and to recommend the creation of joint management structures wherever this is sought.