



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

26 October 2009

Ms Felicity Calvert
Forests Assessment
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 4206
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Ms Calvert

Thank you for providing the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry an opportunity to comment on the *Preliminary assessment report – Riverina bioregion regional forest assessment - river red gums and woodland forests*.

The Riverina region's red gum industry is important for the region's economy and employment – any approach to conserve and sustainably manage our forests should provide long-term security for the forestry sector and the regional communities that depend on it for employment. I consider this preliminary assessment an important step forward in determining the conservation outcomes and a sustainable future for the forests, the forestry industry and local communities in the region.

I trust that our comments attached will be useful in preparing your final assessment and recommendations to the NSW Government. I look forward to reviewing these documents when they are released. Please do not hesitate to contact Erica Day on 6272 4352 if you would like to discuss these comments further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'I R' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Ian Thompson

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY INPUT
TO THE NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION IN RESPONSE TO
PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Comments on the Preliminary Report

<i>Issue 1: have the values supported by the forests been adequately described?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reference to the estimation of environmental values the authors of the NRC report may find some useful information contained in chapter 5, Valuing New South Wales Rivers for use in Benefit Transfer, of the book "Choice Modelling and the Transfer of Environmental Values" edited by John Rolfe and Jeff Bennett published by Edward Elgar Publishing 2006.
<i>Issue 5: What approaches should we take to maintaining the forest values and processes through the transitions that seem inevitable?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.3.1 (p54) – we note the discussion on Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management Framework within Forest Management is appropriate, on the basis all forests – i.e. on both public, including Multiple Use Public Forests (or State Forest) and Nature Conservation Reserves (or National Parks), and private tenure – are managed for a range of values. The authors' have integrated the process of ESFM with a forest harvesting context when it should be elevated to describe all forest management. • 2.2.3 (p21) – we note there is no mention of DAFF which has responsibility with state and territory governments and forest industries to develop forest policy and implement the National Forest Policy Statement 1992 (which is mentioned in 3.4.1 (p64) as a footnote)
<i>Issue 6: What are the key features of a sustainable future for the forests, forest industries and the local communities?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Riverina region's red gum industry is important for the region's economy and employment. The Commission indicated that 157 jobs are associated with accessing timber resources on public land. This employment figure is likely to increase when all associated businesses have been incorporated The Forests NSW Environmental Impact Statement for forestry operations in the region found that over 500 jobs and a \$132 million industry are reliant on the forestry operations in this region. • Approaches that strengthen the comprehensive and rigorous framework for conserving and sustainably managing our forests should be supported. Importantly, this approach should also provide long-term security for the forestry sector and the regional communities that depend on it for employment. • 2.2.3 (p21) – we note there is no mention of DAFF which has responsibility with state and territory governments and forest industries to develop forest policy and implement the National Forest Policy Statement 1992 (which is mentioned in 3.4.1 (p64) as a footnote) • The report indicated that over 60 per cent of the Riverina bioregion has been cleared for agriculture, and grazing on native pastures is the dominant landuse in the area. Ongoing water shortages and rising salinity are threatening agriculture and remnant vegetation. The report may want to further consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grazing in state forests - the forests provide water sources that are suitable for cattle production and provide a feed source to fill the winter gap. This supports approximately 7000 head of cattle per year; ○ The economy of the region is reliant on agriculture, especially irrigated cropping. Irrigated cropping has declined due to low general security of water allocations; ○ Towns within the bioregion will be facing increasing pressures due to climate variability and reduced water allocations.

Other:

- 3.3.1 (p55): Para 1, Sentence 1: insert the word 'Process' after the word Montréal to read "Montréal Process criteria."
- 6th bullet point: Replace Approximation with Country, to read "Country Reports for the Montréal Process."
- Include a 7th bullet: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation Global Forest Resource Assessment reports
- 3.4.5 (p72)
- 4th (Last) para: 3rd sentence: remove r after malleefowlr, and use uppercase for Swift parrot, Thick-billed grasswren, Northern hairy-nosed
- Page 81 Superb Parrot - amend to also include VI EPBC Act.