



Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.



PO Box 188
East Maitland NSW 2323

Wednesday 21 October 2009

Forests Assessment
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 4206
Sydney NSW 2001

Submission to Preliminary Assessment Report on Red Gum Forests

Hunter Environment Lobby (HEL) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the natural Resources Commission preliminary findings from the assessment of the Red Gum Forests of south western NSW.

While our organization primarily works on environmental issues affecting the Hunter Region of NSW, we also take an interest in issues of state conservation significance.

HEL supports the protection of important vegetation remnants in western NSW as a critical need for the survival of declining native species in the state. The River Red Gum wetland forests of the southern river systems are important biodiversity sanctuaries in a heavily cleared and disturbed landscape.

HEL is disappointed that the preliminary assessment report fails to recognise the significance of these areas for biodiversity protection and their role in meeting the national reserve criteria targets.

The emphasis of the assessment report on the timber industry gives it an inappropriate bias. There is no independent consideration of the biological impacts of the patch clear felling logging operations that currently occur in these sensitive riverine ecosystems. The failure to identify refugia, corridors and linking habitats in the region and opportunities for landscape scale conservation planning is a major concern

HEL supports the creation of large new Red Gum National Parks as a first step to rebuilding landscape resilience in the region and providing climate change mitigation.

HEL supports Aboriginal ownership of new National Parks wherever sought by Traditional Owners.

HEL supports a fair restructure package for individuals and businesses affected by changes to the timber industry.

HEL supports a major increase in environmental water allocations to ensure the health of Red Gum protected areas into the future.

We consider the protection of the River Red Gum wetland forests in new National Parks to be the most important environmental achievement for the current NSW Government. We trust that the final recommendations of the Natural Resources Commission will recognise the significance of this opportunity for the future biological health of NSW.

yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Davis', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Jan Davis (President)