

To: Felicity Calvert
Subject: red gum forests

Dear Natural Resources Commission,

I am writing in regards to the assessment of River Red Gum forests which I am very pleased to hear the Natural Resources Commission is carrying out. I am specifically writing to urge you to give this critical habitat as much protection as is physically possible. Australia boasts the highest loss of biodiversity on earth and in a shocking 200 years. It has been stated that we are on the cusp of a new wave of extinctions.....you now have a chance to halt at least some of these extinctions. Not only is this critical to the endangered species that exist in the NSW red gum forests but also to human and community health. Please keep this in mind when going through this challenging task.

It is crucially important that the Natural Resources Commission rapidly assess the extreme threats facing the River Red Gum forests and recommend strong conservation action to avert those threats. I would like to make the following comments on the terms of reference:

1. The environmental crisis facing River Red Gums is severe - it is already well past the eleventh hour. I believe that a decision needs to be implemented and new National Parks created before the end of the year.
2. I believe it is crucial that the precautionary principle is applied in full - given the paucity of detailed environmental surveys in the region. It is important that proper precaution is applied on the side of environmental protection.
3. I support the inclusion in the terms of reference of water management and the impacts of climate change on future water availability.
4. I believe that the identification of large new National Parks should be specified in the terms of reference as a key outcome from the assessment.
5. I support the inclusion of EPBC matters in the assessment but believe that interim protections should be imposed to protect Ramsar wetlands from illegal patch-clearfelling while the assessment takes place.
6. I believe it should be clear how the requirements of the EPBC Act will be met, and specifically what process under that Act will be applied and how the approval process will proceed.
7. The Terms of Reference need to provide stronger and more specific involvement of indigenous people and consultation with indigenous communities. The TOR should require close investigation of Aboriginal Ownership of conservation reserves wherever sought by Traditional Owners.

Regards Elaine Bayes