

Subject: River Red Gum Forests
Natural Resources Commission,

I am very glad that the Natural Resources Commission has been given the task of assessing River Red Gum forests in NSW.

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:



- This region is known to provide habitat for at least 69 plants and animals threatened with extinction, including the Squirrel Glider, Regent Parrot and Southern Bell Frog.
- Vast tracts of Red Gum are already under severe stress and are dying as a result of changed water regimes, yet are still being targeted for intensive logging and grazing.

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.

Gray Arden