



Save Manly Dam Catchment Committee Inc

37 King St,
Manly Vale,
NSW 2093.

25.9.08

Forests Assessment,
Natural Resources Commission,
GPO Box 4206
Sydney 2001.

Dear Natural Resources Commission,

Re: River Red Gum Assessment: Submission advocating the
establishment of new National Parks.

The Save Manly Dam Catchment Committee is a broadly-based community organisation. Our membership includes recognised expertise in hydrology, bushland conservation, Australian native fish, bio-diversity, freshwater ecology, environmental planning, wildlife rehabilitation and bird migration (amongst other fields). We are unanimous in our conclusion that the River Red Gum Forests are in immediate need of urgent protection.

Having visited the Barmah-Millewa and the Kondrook-Perricoota-Gunbower areas on field trips, it is not hard to reach the opinion that these forests are under severe stress. Lack of water due to bad management practices (over allocation of water for irrigation, interrupted river flows etc) is having a major negative impact. To exacerbate this problem, unsustainable logging operations proliferate. cursory investigation will discover large areas of clear-felled forest, feeding small mountains of firewood logs which are bound for Melbourne's fireplaces. Over grazing seems to have eliminated most of the understory of these forests leaving a sad and barren looking shadow of what once was.

May I remind the commission that this area contains ten Ramsar listed wetlands, vitally important habitat for migratory birds (including 19 birds listed for protection under international agreements and 4 globally threatened fish species) as well as a host of endangered native animal and bird species such as the Barking Owl, Squirrel Glider and Superb Parrot.

Virtually every Australian is aware that the Murray-Darling basin is in a state of collapse but for so long the NSW government has done absolutely nothing to address the situation. The Riverina region in fact has just about the most poorly represented reserve system in the land

with less than 2% protected. Why these globally significant forests and wetlands have been allowed to be comprehensively degraded for very low value economic outcomes is a mystery to all. Now is the time to right the wrongs of the recent past. Local indigenous people anecdotally describe the Murray wetlands and forests as a bountiful area of lush beauty and splendour. This nirvana existed within living memory. We owe it to the traditional landowners to return (part or whole) management of this area to them and create new national parks to assist in the conservation and rehabilitation of this precious region. National Park creation has been proven to boost local economies and surely tourism will provide a better long term future for this region as opposed to ongoing environmental destruction. The forests have only a limited viable productive future anyway if current rates of logging continue.

Naturally the logging and pastoral industries should receive fair compensation for ceasing their operations. There must also be measures to protect areas of adjoining native River Red Gum, Cypress and Box forest being exploited- be it on private or public land. The buy back of water licenses and the return of environmental flows are also important elements of the conservation equation.

The Victorian Government has had the vision to create a new reserve system, rationalize the timber industry and create a healthy economic and environmental future on their side of the border.

The Save Manly Dam Catchment Committee urges the NRC to follow suit and make the creation of new national parks across the entire River Red Gum State Forest estate, central to your recommendations. This would be an enormously positive and popular decision which will resound through future generations.

Yours Sincerely

Malcolm Fisher

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'M Fisher', with a stylized, flowing script.

Chairman

Save Manly Dam Catchment Committee.