



# Central

## Local Government Region of South Australia

Incorporated under provisions of the Local Government Act

ABN: 34 728 242 315

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**Member Councils:**

- The Barossa
- Barunga West
- Clare & Gilbert Valleys
- Copper Coast
- Flinders Ranges
- Goyder
- Light Regional
- Mallala
- Mount Remarkable
- Northern Areas
- Orreroo/Carrieton
- Peterborough
- Port Pirie Regional
- Wakefield Regional
- Yorke Peninsula

Secretariat  
Independent review of the EPBC Act 1999  
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Canberra ACT 2601  
[epbcreview@environment.gov.au](mailto:epbcreview@environment.gov.au)  
Attn: Dr Allan Hawke

17<sup>th</sup> December 2008

### **RE: EPBC ACT REVIEW – WITH REFERENCE TO PEPPERMINT BOX/IRONGRASS THREATENED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY**

Dear Dr Hawke,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment to the review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the Australian Government's primary environment and heritage legislation.

The Central Local Government Region is a regional subsidiary under the South Australian Local Government Act 1999 with a primary aim to assist in coordinating and advocating on behalf of its 15 member councils spanning the Barossa and Clare Valleys, Adelaide Plains through to Yorke Peninsula, the Mid and Upper North to the Flinders Ranges.

Our association lies predominately within the Northern and Yorke Regional Natural Resource Management area and the Lofty Block IBRA sub-region and covers approximately one quarter of the regional population and incorporated land mass of South Australia.

The Central Local Government Region has twelve target areas under its current strategic planning cycle reflecting the common issues and areas of interest to the fifteen member Councils including to ensure that .... *Local Government is appropriately resourced and considered as a genuine, integral and active partner to help achieve local natural resource management (NRM) outcomes.*

It is recognised that a significant portion of the EPBC listed Irongrass Natural Temperate Grasslands and Peppermint Box Grassy Woodlands (*Eucalyptus odorata*) communities (listed July 2007) lies within our region.

In considering the terms of reference for the review of the Act, the following comments are offered:

### Assessment and Approvals

*Q2 Does the public understand their responsibilities under the Act to refer proposed actions to the Minister?*

Whilst the concept of 'self assessment' within the spirit of the Act is noble, in reality there appears to be a very low level of awareness within Local Government and the community in general of the legislation and its provisions and unfortunately, even the listed ecological communities in this Region that fall within its charter.

Furthermore, the internal capacity within Local Government across the Region to assist in actively raising local awareness and greater appreciation of the requirements of the Act, but more importantly, the need for protection of the listed ecological communities in our area, is severely limited.

Whilst workshops and information sessions have been conducted by Government agencies from time to time, the technical/environmental expertise does not exist within our rural, under-resourced Councils to pro-actively integrate this into operational policy and procedures, nor generate greater awareness in the broader local community. There is a heavy reliance on agencies with locally-based technical expertise, such as Greening Australia for advice, however it is recognised that these resources are also significantly stretched.

Additional resourcing and awareness raising within Local Government, particularly those within whose jurisdiction listed species or communities or threatening processes exist, will be critical to achieving successful on-ground implementation and compliance with the Act into the future.

*Q6 Does the Act operate effectively in conjunction with State and Territory planning and environmental impact legislation?*

From the perspective of our local, rural Councils, it is unclear how the provisions of the EPBC Act and relevant State planning and environmental legislation interacts and the role of Local Government to support this. The need for closer integration between the myriad of legislative and management responsibilities, and ultimately a more effective, community friendly and streamlined approach is however, imperative.

Where listed species, ecological communities or threatening processes exist, the provision of additional, locally based, on-ground resources to work closely with local government and community is highly recommended. This recognises that balancing environmental protection and development within an ESD framework requires a fundamental shift in thinking for the majority of people and sectors and this in turn, requires long term effort and locally connected resources in order to inherently recognise the issues and change behaviour over time.

Local Government can provide a universal and enduring local mechanism for engaging local communities – access to relevant in house expertise is however the limiting factor for most rural Councils.

### Biodiversity

*Q19 Does the Act provide an appropriate and responsive legislative framework for addressing climate change and other emerging pressures in the context of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation?*

The implications for listings under the Act from climate change impact are unclear, however consideration needs to be given to the potential flow on impacts across the environmental-economic-community spheres of a region, in order to adequately and fully consider the most appropriate response.

*Compliance and Enforcement*

*Q35 Does the Act provide for the appropriate follow-up of environmental assessment and approval decisions, including the monitoring, evaluation and auditing of actions? If not, what other actions could be taken?*

From a broad Local Government perspective, there is no strong evidence of monitoring, evaluation or compliance – again highlighting the need for more local resourcing in areas where there are listings, to ensure long term success in the objectives of the Act.

I trust that the information provided assists in your deliberations and wish the review every success.

Regards



Anita Crisp  
Executive Officer