



the Blue Gum High Forest Group

A coalition of community organisations formed to conserve the Blue Gum High Forest endangered ecological community

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Secretariat
Independent review of the EPBC Act 1999
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Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The EPBC Act has enabled local communities to have protected, matters of national environmental significance, when the State agencies would not support its conservation. Yet subsequently the State has recognised the significance and followed suit.

Blue Gum High Forest was listed as a critically endangered ecological community under the EPBC Act in 2005.

This enabled the largest remnant to be properly protected by preventing development on one hectare which had remained largely intact since the other parts were protected in the 1930s. Co-operative management is now occurring between the State environment agency, Local Government, Sydney Water and the community which is actively involved.

The four year campaign to save the Blue Gum High Forest had educational spinoffs through the community. People learned about the EPBC Act and about the National Reserve System, about ecosystems and connectivity. Without the Act, none of this would have happened.

One hectare minimum area

However, the long term survival of this ecological community depends on its connectivity to other smaller remnants. There is no chance of these being assessed under the EPBC Act because of the 1 hectare minimum area for applying the listing to development sites. This is a serious deficiency in the Act.

Instead a broader planning requirement on all landowners, Local and State Government to work together to retain and recover the ecological community is urgently needed. Instead of the Commonwealth department assessing each development action, a set of targets and actions with a checking mechanism on their implementation could be more effective.

Weeds

The long term threat of weeds and other invasive species appears to be ignored by the Act, yet these present an insidious threat and a huge cost. As well as a broader assessment and planning for conservation of environments of national significance, the Act needs to be amended to assess the threats and provide targets and mechanisms for monitoring the

removal of invasive species. Ideally with would be done based on catchments and landscape scale.

We encourage the Independent Committee assessing the effectiveness of the Act to also consider the issue of population pressure on environments and how all the information provided to the Commonwealth in previous State of the Environment reports can be utilised to inform proper decision making in applying the Act.

On behalf of a coalition of community organisations which succeeded, with the help of the EPBC Act in protecting the largest remnant of Blue Gum High Forest ecological community, we wish for a stronger and even more effective Act.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Pallin".

Nancy Pallin
Chairperson