



FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE - SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON A NOMINATION FOR LISTING

Northern Plains Grasslands Community

Date of receipt of the nomination: 20 October 1991
Date of preliminary recommendation: 14 April 1992
Date of final recommendation: 27 August 1992

File No.: 91/6077

Validity:

The nomination is for a valid item and the prescribed information was provided. The nominated community is clearly described so as to be distinguished from all other communities.

The community is a tussock grassland, dominated by *Danthonia* spp. (including *Danthonia setacea* and *D. caespitosa*) and *Stipa* spp. (including *Stipa nodosa* and *S. gibbosa*) and other sub-dominant grasses with a variety of shrubs and herbs. The families *Asteraceae* (including *Brachyscome chrysoglossa* and *Vittadinia gracilis*) and *Chenopodiaceae* (including *Atriplexa semibaccata* and *Maireana excavata*) are also characteristic. The community is readily distinguished from other grasslands and grassy woodlands in Victoria by the absence of *Themeda triandra*.

It is currently also known as the Murray Valley Grassland as it extends into New South Wales (McDougall, in prep).

Eligibility for listing as a community under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee

The nominated item satisfies at least one criterion of the set of criteria prepared and maintained under Section 11 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, and stated in Schedule 1 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Regulations 1990*.

Evidence that criteria are satisfied:

Criterion 2.1 *The community is in a demonstrable state of decline which is likely to result in extinction.*

Evidence:

The SAC accepted an estimate that approximately 700 ha of the Northern Plains Grassland remains, which is less than 1% of the original extent of the community.

Criterion 2.2 *The community is significantly prone to future threats which are likely to result in extinction.*

Evidence:

The majority of the best quality remnants of the community exist on roadsides and railway reserves and at the Echuca Aerodrome. These areas are not managed primarily for conservation purposes. A small area of low quality grassland exists in the Wharparilla Flora Reserve. Threats to the community include:

- changes in management of rail reserves and roadsides, including changes in frequency and timing of slashing and burning resulting in weed invasion or successional change, as well as direct interference including bulldozing and herbicide application;
- replacement by tree planting;
- cropping and stock grazing.

The data presented on distribution and abundance are the result of comprehensive surveys and provide clear evidence that the community is very rare in terms of abundance and distribution.

Background Information

- Species categorised by Gullan *et al* (1990) as rare or threatened in Victoria occur in the nominated community: *Leptorhynchos panaetioides* (Woolly Buttons) (rare), *Maireana humillima* (Dwarf Bluebush) (rare), *Muehlenbeckia horrida* (Spiny Lignum) (rare), *Pimelea spinescens* subsp. *spinescens* (rare), *Stipa gibbosa* (Spurred Spear-grass) (rare), *Brachyscome chrysoglossa* (Yellow-tongue Daisy) (vulnerable), *Eryngium plantagineum* (Long Eryngium) (vulnerable), *Maireana excavata* (Bottle Bluebrush) (vulnerable).
- Species categorised by Briggs & Leigh (1988) as rare or threatened in Australia occur in the nominated community: *Ptilotus erubescens* (Hairy-tails) (endangered), *Sclerolaena napiformis* (Turnip Bassia) (endangered), *Swainsona plagiotropis* (Red Swainson-pea) (endangered), *Swainsona murrayana* (Murray Swainson-pea) (vulnerable).

- *Swainsona plagiotropis* (Red Swainson-pea) is listed under Schedule 2 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

Advertisement for public comment

In accordance with the requirements of Section 14 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, the preliminary recommendation was advertised for public comment for a period of at least 30 days.

The preliminary recommendation was advertised in:

"The Age" - on 24 June 1992

"The Weekly Times" - on 24 June 1992

Government Gazette - on 24 June 1992

Submissions closed on 31 July 1992.

Further evidence provided:

No public comments were received by the Scientific Advisory Committee.

No evidence was provided to warrant a review of the Scientific Advisory Committee's preliminary recommendation that the community is eligible for listing.

Documentation

The published information and research data provided to the SAC have been assessed. To the best of their knowledge, the SAC believes that the data presented are not the subject of scientific dispute and the inferences drawn are reasonable and well supported.

Final Recommendation of the Scientific Advisory Committee

The Scientific Advisory Committee concludes that on the evidence available the nominated item is eligible for listing in accordance with Section 11(1) of the Act because primary criteria 2.1 and 2.2. are satisfied.

The Scientific Advisory Committee recommends that the nominated item be supported for listing on Schedule 2 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

Selected references:

Baker-Gabb, D.J. & Lunt, I.D. (in prep) Draft conservation program for the grasslands and grassy woodlands in Victoria. Department of Conservation and Environment.

Briggs, J.D. & Leigh, J. H. (1988) *Rare or Threatened Australian Plants* 1988 revised edition. Special Publication No. 14. Aust. Nat. Parks & Wildlife Service, Canberra.

Frood, D. & Calder, M. (1987) *Nature Conservation in Victoria Study Report Vols. 1 and 2*. A Report to the Victorian National Parks Association Inc. VNPA

Gullan, P.K., Cheal, D.C. & Walsh, N.G. (1990) *Rare or threatened plants in Victoria*. Dept. of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne.

LCC (1983) *Report on the Murray Valley Area*. Land Conservation Council, Melbourne.

LCC (1984) *Murray Valley Final Recommendations*. Land Conservation Council, Melbourne.

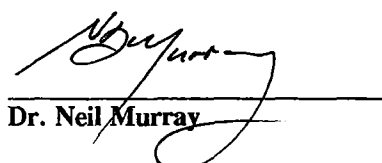
LCC (1987) *Mallee Study Area Review*. Land Conservation Council, Melbourne.

LCC (1989) *Mallee Study Area Final Recommendations*. Land Conservation Council, Melbourne.

McDougall, K. L. (ed.) (in prep) Conservation of Lowland Native Grasslands in South-eastern Australia. World Wide Fund for Nature, Sydney.

Endorsement by the Convenor of the Scientific Advisory Committee

Date


Dr. Neil Murray

23 September 1992