

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

Western (Basalt) Plains Grasslands Community

Date of receipt of the nomination: 13 August 1990 File No.: 90/2346
Date of preliminary recommendation: 22 January 1991
Date of final recommendation: 22 May 1991

Validity:

The nomination is for a valid item and the prescribed information was provided. The nominated community is well defined and described according to standard authoritative references, and it is described in such a way as to be distinguished from all other communities.

The community is characteristically tussock grassland, generally dominated by *Themeda triandra* and other sub-dominant grasses with scattered eucalypts, sub-shrubs and forbs and an associated fauna rich in reptiles (e.g. *Delma impar*, *Egernia cunninghami*, *Unechis flagellum*, *Ctenotus robustus*) and a number of bird and small mammal species. Refer to Biosis (1989) and Seebeck (1984) for lists of grassland fauna.

The SAC accepts that the nominated community corresponds to the community identified by Stuwe & Parsons (1977) as extending across the Western Basalt Plains.

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 prior to European settlement, Western Plains Grassland extended over an area of about 21,000 km². The SAC accepted the estimate of Stuwe (1986) that only about 0.16% of the original extent of the community now remains. Most of the community occurs in small remnants that are managed for purposes other than nature conservation.

Decline is continuing. Since 1983, large areas of significant remnants beside railways have been destroyed by bulldozing.

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

Evidence:

In the opinion of the SAC, threats were clearly defined, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The community is threatened by:

- . modifications to railside and roadside vegetation, by slashing, bulldozing, spray poisoning etc.;
- . destruction for industrial and residential developments
- . cropping and stock-grazing on roadsides and public and private land;
- . modification due to inappropriate burning regimes; and
- . replacement by roadside tree planting.

The community occurs in only two reserves that are larger than 10 hectares, and both contain lower quality vegetation than many unreserved remnants, notably on railsides.

Sub-criterion 2.2.1 *The community is very rare in terms of the total area it covers or it has a very restricted distribution or it has been recorded from only a few localities.*

Evidence:

In the opinion of the SAC, the community has declined to such an extent that there are practically no remnants of the original community remaining. Most of the few existing remnants are in poor and damaged condition.

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

Background Information:

- The SAC vouched for the quality of the references cited in the nomination.
- Many threatened species of plants and animals occur or have occurred in the community. Of these, *Rutidosia leptorrhyncoides* (Button Wrinklewort), *Senecio macrocarpus* (Large-fruit Groundsel), *Thesium australe* (Austral Toad-flax), *Lepidium hyssopifolium* (Peppercress), *Psoralea tenax* (Tough Psoraléa), *P. parva* (Small Psoralea), *Perameles gunnii* (Eastern Barred Bandicoot), *Delma impar* (Striped legless lizard) and *Dasyurus viverrinus* (Eastern Quoll) have received the SAC's final recommendation for listing.

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 6 February 1991

"Weekly Times" - on 6 February 1991

Government Gazette - on 6 February 1991

Submissions closed on 8 April 1991.

Further evidence provided:

Submissions were received, both supporting and opposing listing, but no new 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 SAC also concludes that sub-criterion 2.2.1 has been satisfied and that no evidence exists to suggest that primary criterion 2.2. cannot be satisfied as a consequence of sub-criterion 2.2.1 being 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:

Cheal, D.C., Lau, J.A., Robinson, R.W., Ellis, J.E. & Cameron, D.G. (in prep.) *Vegetation Survey and Sites of Botanical Significance in the Melbourne Area*. Department of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne.

DCE (1990) *Remnant native grasslands and grassy woodlands of the Melbourne Area. An action plan for conservation based on biological values*. Department of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne. VGPO.

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

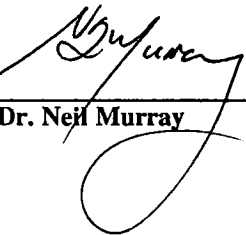
Groves, R.H. & Williams, O.B. (1981) *Natural grasslands*. In: Groves, R.H. [ed.] *Australian Vegetation* pp. 293-316. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge.

- Lunt, I.D. (1990) A floristic survey of the Derrimut Grassland Reserve, Melbourne, Victoria. *Proc. R. Soc. Vic.* 102: 41-52.
- Scarlett, N.H. & Parsons, R.F. (1982) Rare plants of the Victorian plains. *In: Groves, R.H. & Ride, W.D.L. [eds.] Species at risk: research in Australia.* pp. 89-105. Proc. Symp. on the Biology of Rare and Endangered Species in Australia. Aust. Academy of Science, Canberra.
- Seebeck, J.H. (1984) Mammals of the plains, or where have all the wombats gone? *In: Conley, D. & Dennis, C. [ed.] (1984) The Western Plains - A Natural and Social History.* pp. 39-53. Aust. Inst. of Ag. Science, Melbourne.
- Stuwe, J. (1986) An assessment of the conservation status of native grasslands on the Western Plains, Victoria, and sites of botanical significance. *Arthur Rylah Inst. Env. Res. Tech. Rep. Ser. No. 48*, Dept. of Conservation, Forests and Lands.
- Stuwe, J. & Parsons, R.F. (1977) *Themeda australis* grasslands on the basalt plains, Victoria: floristics and management effects. *Aust. J. Ecol.* 2: 467-476
- Willis, J.H. (1964) Vegetation of the basalt plains in western Victoria. *Proc. R. Soc. Vic.* 77: 397-418.

Endorsement by the Convenor of the Scientific Advisory Committee

Date

19 June, 1991



Dr. Neil Murray