



Submission to:

Ecological Communities Section, Department of the Environment
and Energy

Tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) woodlands and forests of the
Swan Coastal Plain: Proposal to list as a nationally threatened
ecological community

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Organisational background

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc.) (WAFarmers) is Western Australia's largest and most influential rural advocacy and service organisation. WAFarmers boasts a membership of over 3,500 primary production businesses and individual farmers including grain growers, meat and wool producers, horticulturalists, dairy farmers, commercial egg producers and beekeepers. Collectively our members are major contributors to the \$8.2 billion gross value of production that agriculture in its various forms contributes annually to Western Australia's economy.

Introduction

WAFarmers represents the majority of the commercial sector of the beekeeping industry in the state, both in the number of hives it represents and the volume of honey. WAFarmers welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Tuart (Eucalyptus gomphocephala) woodlands and forests of the Swan Coastal Plain*.

WAFarmers thanks the Ecological Communities Section of the Department of the Environment and Energy for the extension on submitting our comments.

Comments

Western Australian honey is considered to be world class, both in quality and the environment of production. There are more than 40,000 registered bee hives in WA maintained by more than 120 commercial beekeepers in WA, as well as a large number of hobbyist beekeepers. WA represents more than 7.5 per cent of total national honey production. Over 2015/16 the WA apiculture industry produced \$11 million worth of product of which about half was exported, including live bee exports, honey and beeswax. Honey production is a unique contributor to the WA economy, and is a growing industry.

Tuart woodlands and forests occur along narrow limestone belt on the coastal plain. In the northern regions, Tuart occurs with multi-stemmed Mallee, which is an area heavily used by beekeepers for honey production. Tuart is an excellent honey producer and a valued species in the apiculture industry. The Tuart species flowers from January to April and acts as a good option over the summer for beekeepers. Tuart is also commonly found with other tree species that are useful to beekeepers, particularly the Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) species.

The Jarrah tree is a native unique to WA, with Jarrah forests extending from Gingin to Albany. It grows in the rich, environmentally pristine native forests from Perth to WA's South West, commonly in occurrence with the Tuart species. Jarrah honey fetches premium prices in both domestic and international markets due to its high antimicrobial and antioxidant qualities, and is a considerable asset to the Western Australian honey industry.

Forests used by the apiculture industry are heavily under threat due to harvesting of forests, prescribed burning and land clearing, with remaining trees under stress from other factors including climate change and dieback. As approximately 80 per cent of Tuart woodlands and forests have already been cleared for residential development and agricultural land, it is important to ensure the remaining portions of the woodlands are protected to safeguard the longevity of the Tuart species in WA. WAFarmers Beekeepers Section considers the key threat to the Tuart woodlands and forests to be continued clearing and would

like to see the end on any further clearing to the community.

When assessing the possible listing and protection of the Tuart woodlands and forests, it is imperative that all stakeholders, including the apiary industry, are engaged on the issue to ensure a positive outcome. Any damage or loss of the Tuart woodlands and forests could threaten the beekeeping industry in WA. On behalf of WAFarmers' Beekeeper Members and the wider beekeeping industry, WAFarmers agrees that the ecological community merits listing as critically endangered. Beekeepers continue to be alarmed by the continued loss of native vegetation in WA, particularly areas of the Tuart woodlands on the Swan Coastal Plain; these concerns are well explained in the *Draft Conservation Advice*. The listing of the Tuart woodlands and forests would help ensure the protection and management of the community from land clearing, fire and weed management. Any protection mechanisms placed on unique ecological communities are beneficial to the thriving beekeeping industry here in Western Australia.