



# ***Peel Preservation Group Inc.***

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RE: TUART WOODLANDS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Peel Preservation Group based in Mandurah, Western Australia is very supportive of the proposal to list the Tuart Woodlands as a Nationally Threatened Ecological Community. The loss of 80% of these woodlands to development is of extremely serious concern.

European settlement hasn't been kind to the Tuart Tree. Tuart trees (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) only grow in a very narrow corridor along the coastal plain of our lower south-west, and nowhere else in the world. Unfortunately for the Tuart this is exactly the same geographical area where the vast majority of our population has chosen to reside. Our population centres of Joondalup, Perth, Rockingham, Mandurah, Bunbury and Busselton are exactly superimposed on the natural domain of the Tuart, with the vast majority of Tuart forest having already been felled to appease our voracious appetite for urban, suburban, commercial and agricultural development.

Members of our organisation, as well as many people in the Mandurah and Peel community, constantly lament the regular loss of yet another grove of tuart trees, or a patch of local bushland, for yet another suburban housing development, shopping centre or even substantial road widening. One of the sad outcomes is that some of our unique native fauna, such as bandicoots and possums etc. who reside in the ever shrinking tuart forests then move to suburban backyards for survival, only to become prey to feral and domestic cats, or found dead on the roadside as they fail to adjust to a radically different and changing environment. (I have personal experience of this, for a bandicoot who took up residence in my back garden after a major bush clearing half a kilometre away was subsequently run over in the night on our busy suburban road). These displaced native animals are the other refugees that we don't take in to responsible consideration.

As well as the unique fauna that are sustained by our tuart forests, there is a wonderful diversity of indigenous flora that grows in these coastal woodlands, and NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD. As a very keen native orchidologist, I am acutely aware of the many species of native orchids that only grow along the narrow coastal strip of the south-west of WA and are not found outside of the Tuart woodlands.

**PPG is a non-profit organisation devoted to the conservation of the natural environment in the Peel Region of Western Australia**

Our few remaining Tuart forests, such as the beautiful Ludlow forest north of Busselton, are a sight to behold and will become even more valuable in the future as eco-tourism becomes more prominent. In the rush for development and economic growth, conservative governments, in particular, routinely underestimate the enormous potential of eco-tourism. Rather than coming to see concrete urbanisation, an ever increasing number of Asia's burgeoning middle-class in particular will want to see the unique fauna and flora of our Tuart woodlands. Earlier this year I organised a display of my native orchid photos from the Peel region as part of Mandurah's annual "Stretch Festival". A group of Chinese tourists called in to look at this display and were absolutely amazed at the striking, unique beauty of this flora from the Tuart woodlands. They were keen to know where they could see these orchids in their natural setting, and also keen to tell their friends back in Beijing of the wondrous natural beauty in our forest that they had never even heard of until they visited the orchid photo display.

In summary, protecting woodlands and placing legislative restrictions in regard to development is always seen as a costly exercise for State and Federal governments. But apart from the ethical and moral obligations to responsibly protect the unique biodiversity of the remaining Tuart woodlands and limit the sad demise of displaced fauna, the opportunities for eco-tourism in this south-west coastal corner of WA are legion.

Yours sincerely  
Melvyn J. Tuckey  
Committee Member  
Peel Preservation Group Inc.