

**Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage on  
Inquiry into public good conservation**

**IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES IMPOSED ON LANDHOLDERS**

**Submission by:**

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**Terms of Reference**

- the impact on landholders and farmers in Australia of public-good conservation measures imposed by either State or Commonwealth Governments
- policy measures adopted internationally to ensure the cost of public good conservation measures are ameliorated for private landholders;
- appropriate mechanisms to establish private and public-good components of Government environment conservation measure; and
- recommendations, including potential legislative and constitutional means to ensure that costs associated with public-good conservation measures are shared equitably by all members of the community.

This submission will primarily deal with the first term of reference and will address the impact of the recovery of the Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren (a nationally critically endangered species) on private landholders and farmers on the Southern Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia.

This submission will address the impact of the following conservation measures:

1. land clearing restrictions
2. retaining and expanding remnant vegetation
3. care of wetlands

**The recovery program**

The Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren recovery program aims to increase habitat available and ultimately the population of this critically endangered bird. The project aims to increase habitat available through revegetation efforts to increase connections between remaining isolated habitat patches and improving the quality and quantity of available habitat through favourable land management practices. Most rehabilitation actions are carried out in swamp habitat and thus have further implications for catchment health issues.

**Landholder involvement**

Almost all of the remaining populations of this species occur on private property. The current major land use is improved pasture grazing for dairy, beef cattle and fat lamb industries. Other land uses include crops, orchards and increasingly vineyards. Landholders provide access to their property for project officers to study aspects of the ecology of the species. Landholders also provide considerable time and resources to the project including: fencing labour; growing of plants; planting of plants; and land for habitat, not by removing grazing animals but altering land management practices to increase Emu-wren habitat. The impacts that these activities have on the landholders are addressed below. These activities are completely voluntary. Many landholders contact the project to discuss how their land management actions and goals can be linked with the goals our project and if so what financial or other assistance we can provide them.

**1. Land Clearing Restrictions**

Under the South Australian state government's Native Vegetation Act (1991) landholders are prohibited from removing native vegetation from land. They are not prohibited from using this land for grazing purposes. Land management practices such as burning and slashing which have a component of land clearing to them are still permitted if they have been a part of the 'usual' farming practices before the

inception of the Act. These practices do not permanently remove vegetation and in some cases may even promote growth of certain species, thus they may change the species composition of the habitat.

#### Impacts

- retention of native vegetation aids in the prevention of dryland salinity, spread of water logging and erosion all of which are issues in the region (see appendix 1 for information on land degradation issues in the region).
- vegetated areas may be used by the landholder (ie for grazing) providing the vegetation is not removed
- increases in productivity through shelter of stock and crops, giving increased plant growth, extra production of stock due to reduced energy maintenance requirement, improved lambing survival and losses of shorn sheep

## **2. Retaining and expanding remnant vegetation**

The swamp habitat we are rehabilitating for the use by emu-wrens is one of the land types most vulnerable to degradation in the region (appendix 1) and where measures for improvement of degraded land begin. Management recommendations to decrease land degradation issues in the region (appendix 1) are the same actions that the project is promoting to conserve Emu-wrens.

#### Impacts

- provision of money to landholders for fencing materials
- provision of plants and planting labour for revegetation work
- provision of advice on the effect of various land management practices on the swamps and how this land can be sustainably managed without being completely removed from use
- increase in productivity through amelioration of land degradation problems by rehabilitation of watercourses and wetland areas
- increase in productivity through the provision of shelter to stock and crops
- advantages the community via downstream effects of improvement of water quality (reduced salinity and acidification) giving an overall improvement in catchment health

## **3. Care of Wetlands**

The care and maintenance of wetlands/swamps provides habitat for Emu-wrens and has a number of advantages to landholders. The Emu-wren project does not actively manage wetlands but promotes the importance of the care swamps and provides landholders with tools for sustainable management.

#### Impacts

- control of erosion in drainage lines and protection of water quality
- prevention of land degradation factors associated with clearance and subsequent wetting and drying of acid sulphate soils, which have the potential to cause severe soil structural decline, water logging, anaerobic soil conditions, erosion and decline in water quality.
- reduction of sediment, salinity, nutrients and faecal coliform inflow into water courses through filtering by buffer zones improving water quality which impacts on the immediate landholder, downstream users and the community if the water course is in the watershed zone

- reduction of flows by vegetation decreases peaks of flood and hence reduces waterlogging and water erosion
- provision of fencing materials
- provision of technical advice on sustainable management of wetlands

### **Further Information**

This submission has been made on behalf of the Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren Recovery Program.

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