

SUBMISSION - Inquiry into the operation of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

By MAUREEN COOPER – Owner/Manager Padaminka Nature Refuge

- the effectiveness of responses to key threats identified within the EPBC Act, including land-clearing, climate change and invasive species, and potential for future measures to build environmental resilience and facilitate adaptation within a changing climate;

The response I would like to make to the above is unprintable, however I will try to explain it in a calm manner.

The EPBC Act has been completely and utterly useless in its effectiveness of responses to the above. Mackay is losing most of its high tide migratory wader roost sites to so called Tourism. Sandfly Creek roost site which is under an Environmental Reserve agreement with our Local Council is being slowly destroyed because Council had a cement road put right through where the waders fly in to make the area more attractive so they could sell a block of Council Land to a developer who wants to put up a multi storey complex for sporting people. This road now allows small motorbikes to be driven through the site and people also allow their dogs to run free through it. There is still no management plan for this area which I have been fighting for 7 years now. What does it take to protect an area of such importance. Certainly not EPBC.

Shellgrit Creek will be overtaken by an extension to the runway of the airport. Blacks Beach Spit is slowly being overtaken by housing and their inevitable dogs and cats. Armstrong beach is slowly losing most of its shore front vegetation to housing which adds more stress to the roost sites. At my last survey there the waders were chased 6 times off their roost site by people and dogs.

Land clearing for developments is still occurring and often these companies go bust and leave a legacy of erosion and runoff to the reef. i.e. False Cape. There was an enormous amount of runoff from the developments in Airlie at the Marina and also housing. Airlie Beach is a disaster already and if the EPBC Act allows Shale Oil mining in the Goorganga Plain just outside Proserpine it will truly show that State Development runs this country and there is no legislation to save our endangered wildlife. EPA do as they are told by the Government and there is no job satisfaction in their ranks as they can't prevent the environmental destruction happening in Queensland. Queensland should change its name to "COAL LAND". With the Keela Wetlands also up for grabs by heavy industrial projects and Shoalwater Bay earmarked

for another coal port please tell me what the EPBC Act is going to do to stop this lunacy.

Conservation Groups have had most of their funding cut deliberately so they can't speak out. Is it any wonder that Greenpeace activists do what they can to get the message out loud and clear? Queensland is the highest emitter of carbon in Australia and it is set to escalate with all the proposed increase in coal and shale oil mining. However the public is asked to change lightbulbs and turn off electrical goods at the wall to save the planet. What did EPBC or EPA do in the case of Targinny and the destruction of a beautiful area with organic farms growing food (we can't eat oil or coal) and also the destruction of peoples health. That was very nicely covered up by Queensland Health, just like in Mt. Isa. This same shale oil company (most of the board members are the same but it has a different name) is the one proposing to mine our Goorganga wetlands with the same equipment only it will be on a much larger scale.

Will the Government pay out proper compensation to landholders when the wetlands are polluted and the tourism industry is destroyed by the foul smelling, toxic smoke that will blow across the area Will the Government pay the health bills for the people affected by this proposal? Our Premier has told a landholder that the project has been given the go-ahead and it won't be stopped. This is despite the fact that no EIS has been done and despite all the facts worldwide about the environmental and health problems that it causes. We have seen it first hand in Targinny but all this is ignored. Why would we want to mine the dirtiest form of oil for the least return? Our Government needs a Royal Commission to look at who is being funded by whom.

Queensland is covered with invasive pest species, most of which were introduced by a Government Department, DPI, and now it is up to volunteers to try to fix the problem with little or no funding. To name a few - Hymenachne, para grass, guinea grass, Leucena, Penny Leaf, Lantana, Grader Grass, Thatch Grass, Mimosa Pigra etc. Also there are many garden escapees that are covering our bush landscape and which are proving very hard to eradicate.

- the effectiveness of Regional Forest Agreements, in protecting forest species and forest habitats where the EPBC Act does not directly apply;

I know for a fact that our mangrove forests are suffering and they are supposed to be fully protected. What a laugh. They are destroyed for roads, housing, tourist developments etc. If I damage a mangrove tree I will be fined but Main Roads and Developers can destroy with immunity. When Mackay had the largest area of dieback seen by Mangrove experts it was covered up for years and the Government is still trying to cover up the fact that it was caused by herbicides flowing off farms during a flood event. Our cane farmers still farm almost right to the edge of waterways. The very edge is usually a track for the tractor to access the area. Some farmers are planting trees but it is not enough. They must

be made also to give up that area of cane and move at least 100mts from creeks and rivers. The excess nutrients from the farms has killed our near shore reefs. They are covered with algae and dead or dying.

Our Melaleuca forests and being felled right throughout the district for housing. Some of these trees must be at least two hundred years old. The caravan site at Illawong was sold and the large old Melaleuca's destroyed for high rise apartments to go in. Everyone in Mackay loved this area. It is now gone. Rainforest at Eungella (privately owned) was burnt and felled for horses. This should not be allowed. There is plenty of land already cleared if people wish to keep horses.

Our Brigalow forests are endangered (less than 6% of what used to be there) but mining companies can still destroy it at will. Newlands Wolombi mine were allowed to destroy 700 ha of old growth brigalow without a murmur from EPBC. I would suggest that our Brigalow is at even less than 6% now because there have been no surveys since the mines escalated their clearing. Where are the wildlife corridors to connect up these small pockets of Of Concern and Endangered vegetation. All Nature Refuges should have corridors connecting to other refuges and stock routes to enable our wildlife to move with the changing climate. My Nature Refuge is being built out with housing development and there is no requirement for a buffer zone, a corridor or a covenant on cats and dogs. My endangered species will be dead and gone species soon. EPBC should be enforcing these requirements on our local councils.

- the impacts of other environmental programmes, eg EnviroFund, GreenCorps, Caring for our Country, Environmental Stewardship Programme and Landcare in dealing with the decline and extinction of certain flora and fauna;

Envirofund was a disaster. I applied and waited months to find out if I was successful. Then having been told that I was, the CVA people came and removed lantana on a hillside and sent me a bill. When I presented this to EPA I was told that the money had not come through and that our local NRM Group would have to handle it. I was even asked to pay for it myself. I will never again ask for a government grant to get work done on my Nature Refuge. It is a total waste of time. The work should have been carried out in winter when the Lantana was dying back from lack of water and it would have been cooler for the volunteers to work. Instead it was done when the lantana was most vigorous and it was extremely hot. Even I can plan better than that and I don't have any degrees. Meanwhile I was being offered round 2 funding when round 1 didn't eventuate. How can anyone respect an organisation that runs like this.

All voluntary groups such as GreenCorps, CVA etc. mean well but they have no real training for their team leaders. This is disasterous when they are brushcutting or removing weeds as they don't know the

difference between native species and weeds. CVA International volunteers are a total disaster as they are mostly terrified of snakes, ticks, spiders etc. The last team I had did more harm than good when one member of their team attacked my trees with a mattock to remove vine that was strangling the tree. The damage to the 6 year old trees before I stopped him was appalling.

CVA obtains most of its funding from Coal mining companies and oil mining companies so therefore cannot speak out about the destruction in Central Queensland. Revegetating creeks and rivers that coal mines have destroyed does not negate the damage they have done and are continuing to do. These companies have a free permit to pollute and destroy our Of Concern and Endangered ecosystems. EPBC does nothing to protect our wildlife because they accept so called "Offsets" in exchange for permits to destroy. Offsets are fuffies. The Offset areas already have as many animals and birds living and feeding in them as that area can cope with. Our dispossessed species have to fight for nesting hollows and food which causes stress to all the species and eventually death to some. Sometimes it takes 5 years before the decrease in species is noticed and only then if the area is being surveyed regularly. This does not happen.

I will not allow another CVA team on my property until they are funded by green companies. The only thing they contribute is a greenwash to the mining companies with all their media hype and photos of the smiling people planting trees.

Landcare people have requested that rehabilitated mining land be replanted with Buffle grass which is an exotic and extremely harmful to our environment. This is done for the grazing industry which first requested this pest species to be grown here. Even Nature Refuges out west are being overtaken by this grass to the detriment of the native species. Our Hairy-nosed Wombat has decreased in numbers because of this exotic.

Caring for Country has had most of its funding cut. It seems strange that so much money is being given to Coal Mining Companies when it should be going to renewables. There is so much technology out there for solar and it is not being utilized or recognised by our Government. Why pretend to Care for Country when all our small towns are being ruined by the mining industries. Our small businesses are losing all their best workers to the mines and it is becoming increasingly difficult for ordinary people to have any household item fixed let alone a small tractor. Even Agforce expressed their dismay at what Central Queensland is turning into – a big black hole.

What has happened to the Queensland Brigalow Belt Reptile Recovery Plan 2006 – 2010.? The Brigalow Belt has the dubious record of containing the largest number of threatened regional ecosystems of any

bioregion in Queensland. Has it been thrown in the too-hard basket because of the increase in mining.

Finches are becoming rarer in the mining areas. Does anyone care? No. Jobs, Jobs, Jobs and lots of money for Queensland which is not seen in the regional areas.

I am so tired of the glossy handouts from our Government on what it is doing for our wetlands and mangroves etc. These tell us how we, the public, should be saving them whilst the Government continues to hand out permits to destroy them. A few years ago, armed with a glossy brochure on the Macquarie Marshes, I set out to see this wonderful place. Can you imagine the disgust I felt when I discovered that this Ramsar listed area had been sucked dry by cotton farming and even the graziers were having to cart water for their cattle. EPBC has done absolutely nothing for our endangered species. The endangered Wedge-tailed Eagle of Tasmania has now lost 13 of its number to Wind Power. The carnage does not stop. Wind Power will destroy all our birds and bats. We should be concentrating on solar power which does not harm our wildlife.

EPBC has never had to take into account the cumulative effects of all these mines – the EIS is only done on the immediate area. Anyone with half a brain can see what is happening to our wildlife and ecosystems. You don't need a university degree to know that all these mines have a flow on effect across the landscape.

My last complaint is that ordinary people are asked to comment on these massive developments within a couple of weeks of the IAS being made public. Unless you have a degree in Environmental Science or some other degree then you are floundering. The spin doctors on TV inform us all that the benefits will be huge to these country communities. Instead the reality is more domestic violence, drug use, loss of life on our inadequate roads and rising house prices and rentals.

All the existing legislation to protect our wildlife should be guaranteed to do just that. No free permits to pollute. No offsets allowed for destruction of Endangered RE's. Until EPA are allowed to have teeth instead of being just a advisory body we will continue to lose species. I would love to sell my Nature Refuge to get away from Mackay because I hate what it has become and what has been allowed to happen to our areas of high biodiversity – East Point for one. However, where would I go. The whole state is being dug up for minerals and NSW is not far behind.

I AM NOT A PROUD AUSTRALIAN. I THOUGHT THAT WE WERE GOING TO SHOW THE WORLD HOW TO COMBAT THE RISING LEVEL OF CARBON WITH OUR GREAT TECHNOLOGY IN SOLAR BUT INSTEAD WE ARE STILL DOWN THERE WITH THE DINOSAURS.