

REF: EPBC 2020/8651 “Scenic Precinct” – Controlled Action

Lot 51 SP242316 and Lot 50 SP242316 and Lot 1 RP863336

Springfield College Drive, Springfield, Ipswich, QLD

Professor Hugh Possingham

4 Jan 2025

To: Springfield City Group scenic@springfieldqld.au

PO Box 4167, Springfield QLD 4300

CC: politicians

I refer to a proposal to clear 24.2 ha of Koala habitat by Springfield City Group on Lot 51 SP242316. This was deemed to be a “controlled action” in 2020.

In my professional opinion I believe that this referral should be rejected due to the unacceptable impact on EPBC-listed species (including the Endangered Koala), and other Matters of National Environmental Significance.

Background

Australia is in an extinction crisis. In the 1990s I worked with Senator Robert Hill to create the EPBC Act to avert that crisis. Unfortunately, extinctions continue at pace (www.tsx.org.au) and this is because EPBC approvals are being given by the Federal Government for actions that destroy the known habitat of nationally listed species. This is yet another such case. It is a fact that when the habitat of a listed species is degraded and/or destroyed its extinction probability increases.

I write my comments as one of the world’s most renowned conservation scientists. No other conservation scientist in the world is a member of the British, US and European scientific academies. I was Chief Scientist of the world’s biggest environmental not-for-profit (The Nature Conservancy, annual turnover >\$2 billion) and I am Vice-President of BirdLife Australia (c350,000 supporters).

What Matters of National Environmental Significance are threatened by this development?

*The Scenic Precinct project area occupies a total land area of c24 ha and the entirety of the ‘Woogaroo Forest’ area is considered to contain ‘critical habitat’ for the Koala (Endangered, EPBC), Grey-headed Flying-fox (Vulnerable, EPBC), Swift Parrot (Critically Endangered, EPBC), Regent Honeyeater (Critically Endangered, EPBC), Shaggy-Leaved Plectranthus (*Coleus habrophyllus*), and Angle-Stemmed Myrtle (*Gossia gonoclada*) (Endangered, EPBC). Clearing of EPBC-listed species’ habitat is an ‘unacceptable impact’ because it increases extinction risk for all these species.*

I have visited the site and, as an ornithologist, I note it has a relatively intact woodland bird fauna including some migratory birds – e.g. rufous fantail. Its integrity would decrease with any habitat loss. Woodland birds are declining across Australia.

Cumulative impacts and broader context

Not only is the affected habitat important to EPBC listed species, the EPBC Act must consider cumulative impacts from past and future likely development in the area. The Scenic precinct is part of

Woogaroo Forest (c450ha) and other developments are proposed. All of these developments, taken together, will render the area inviable for the species and communities listed above.

Australia has committed to conserving 30% of its land for nature, yet Ipswich Council is already below 30% protected. This is a science-based figure, and it demands habitat restoration in the area, not habitat destruction.

This proposed action is a controlled action; it should be rejected due to transgressions of the EPBC Act described above.

Yours faithfully

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