

21/05/2021

Submission to Central Coast Council: Asset Sales Program - Tranche 3

The Hunter Community Environment Centre (HCEC) objects to the Central Coast Council's (CCC) proposal to sell off 7 parcels of bushland on Wyong Road to the Mariners FC.

The land is currently zoned as E3 Environmental Management which speaks to the conservation value of this parcel of land. Privatisation removes the public protection it has as Council land, making it easier for future rezoning and development.

The bushland under question is Alluvial Riparian Blackbutt Forest (Bell 2019) which under the *Threatened Species Act 1995* was listed as an Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) (River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains EEC) (Bell 2016). In addition to the forest itself being endangered, the Atlas of Living Australia lists several sightings of threatened species in the area. Within a mere 2.5 km radius of the site, there have been squirrel gliders, the Eastern Bent-winged Bat and the Eastern Freetail Bat sited, all of which are listed as Vulnerable in NSW under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

The squirrel glider sighting closest to the 7 parcels of land on Wyong road occurred in the same forest type, i.e. Alluvial Riparian Blackbutt Forest. Some of the species which make up the Alluvial Riparian Blackbutt Forest are *Eucalyptus pilularis*, *Acacia irrorata subsp. irrorata* and *Angophora costata* all of which have been shown to be important species in squirrel glider habitat. *E. pilularis* is an overstorey species which produces nectar as a food source during the winter, *A. irrorata* produce a gum which squirrel gliders feed on (Fallding 2015) and high densities of squirrel gliders have been found in forests with *A. costata* (Smith and Murray 2003)

It is crucial that we begin to look at development and land clearing from a broader perspective, noting and predicting the cumulative impacts of small developments. Nowadays, squirrel gliders often live in subpopulations which are connected via vegetation corridors forming a regional metapopulation. The corridors allow for gene flow and can be the difference between the local survival or extinction.

Squirrel gliders live along the east coast of Australia with a high concentration around the Lake Macquarie and Central Coast areas. In order to ensure the squirrel glider does not dive further towards extinction, we need to look after these populations and discontinue the destruction of their habitats.

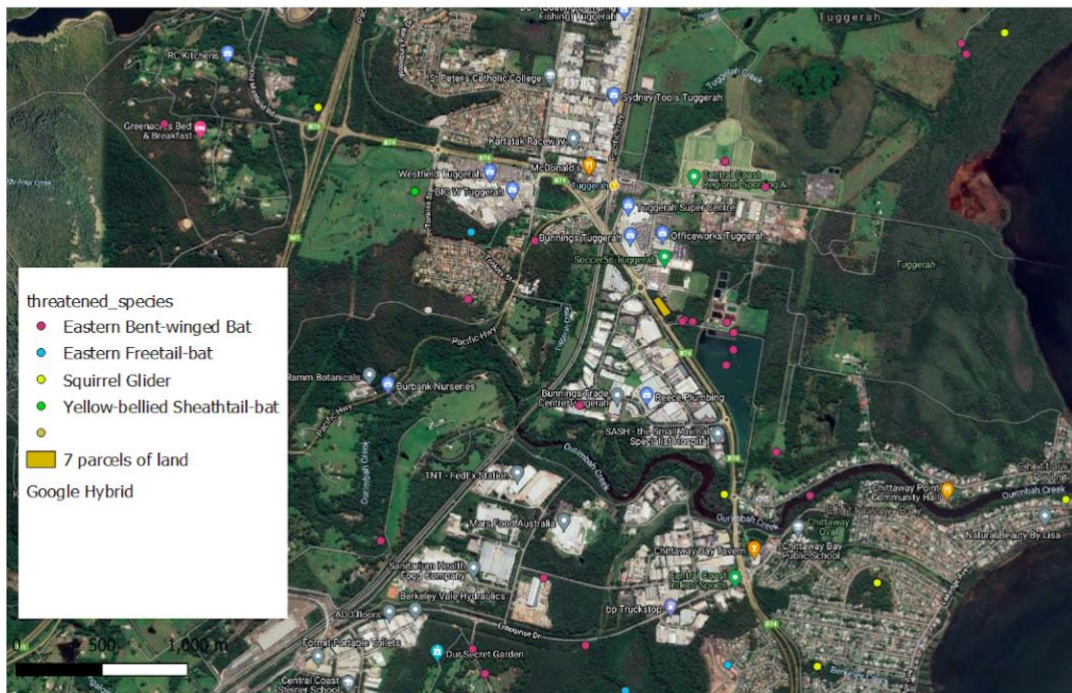
The 7 parcels of land are connected to other small fragments of bushland and eventually to the larger area of bush to the east on the western shore of Tuggerah Lake.

We urge the CCC not to sell the land and to do a thorough evaluation of this bushland and identify all the threatened species (flora and fauna) which inhabit it and the surrounding, connected bushland.

Australia has a very high level of endemism while simultaneously holding the unenviable position of fourth-worst country in the world for faunal extinction (Spraggon 2018).

In light of this, it is critical that we look at the cumulative impacts of clearing bushland and protect forests so we can preserve the wonderful biodiversity of Australia. We urge the CCC to be proactive about this, think to the future and take this opportunity to maintain the conservation of this bush at E3 rather than sell it off where it is at danger of being rezoned and developed.

Sightings of Threatened Species Near The 7 Parcels of Land



References

[Atlas of Living Australia, https://www.ala.org.au/](https://www.ala.org.au/)

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Smith, Andrew & Murray, M. (2003). *Habitat requirements of the squirrel glider (Petaurus norfolcensis) and associated possums and gliders on the New South Wales central coast*. Wildlife Research - WILDLIFE RES. 30. 10.1071/WR01115.

Spraggon, B., 2018. [online] Available at: <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-20/australia-fourth-on-animal-extinction-list/10002380?nw=0>> [Accessed 20 May 2021].

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