

NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee

Conservation Assessment of the ecological community Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion

NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee 2026

Name: Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion

Distribution: New South Wales endemic

Related EPBC Act ecological community: Lowland Grassy Woodland of the South East Corner Bioregion

Current EPBC Act Status: Critically Endangered (Date effective 16 February 2013)

Current NSW BC Act Status: Endangered (Gazettal date 2 December 2011)

Proposed listing on NSW BC Act: Endangered

Summary of Conservation Assessment

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion was found to be eligible for listing as Endangered under IUCN Criteria A3; B1a(i)bc.

The main reasons for this ecological community being eligible for listing as Endangered under these criteria are: (1) it has undergone a large historical reduction in geographic distribution since 1750; (2) it has a highly restricted geographic distribution and there are threatening processes that are likely to cause continuing decline in geographic distribution and biotic interactions in the near future; and (3) the ecological community occurs at a very low number (2–4) of threat-defined locations.

Background

Lowland Grassy Woodland in the South East Corner Bioregion was first listed as Endangered in NSW under a Final Determination in August 2007 (NSW Scientific Committee 2007). In December 2011 a minor amendment corrected minor errors or omissions in the Determination in relation to the Thackway and Cresswell (1995) reference. In 2026, a concurrent reassessment of the Illawarra and South Coast Lowland Forest and Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions Endangered Ecological Community incorporated additional data that had become available since its first assessment and updated information about its extent and distribution.

This assessment of the Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion Ecological Community clarifies its relationship with the Illawarra and South Coast Lowland Forest and Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions Ecological Community based on new field survey data (DPE 2022a) and other information (e.g., DPE 2022b; Gellie 2005; Tindall *et al.* 2004; Tozer *et al.* 2010).

Description

The Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion Ecological Community encompasses all constituent organisms, including plants, animals, fungi and other microbes. Threatened flora and fauna that may occur in the ecological community are listed in Appendix 3. Over 340 species of native plants have been recorded, with most species' diversity recorded in the ground layer. Variation in plant species composition and vegetation structure appears to be related to topographic position, edaphic properties and moisture (DPE 2022a).

Vegetation structure and plant species composition

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is characterised by the assemblage of species listed in Table 1 and typically comprises an open eucalypt-dominated tree canopy (*sensu* Specht 1970), a near-continuous groundcover dominated by grasses and forbs, usually with layers of shrubs and/or small trees that vary in density and height. Stands within an intact tree layer may have a woodland or forest structure. Small trees or saplings may dominate the community in relatively high densities after disturbance. The community also includes 'derived' native grasslands which result from removal of the woody strata.

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is characterised by an overstorey that is usually dominated by *Eucalyptus tereticornis* (forest red gum), often with *E. globoidea* (white stringybark) and/or *Angophora floribunda* (rough-barked apple) and other eucalypts at some sites. For example, *E. melliodora* (yellow box) and *E. pauciflora* (snow gum, white sally) may be locally common at some sites while being comparatively rare in other ecological communities on the south coast lowlands. Other tree species include *E. baueriana* (blue box), *E. bosistoana* (coastal grey box) and *E. maidenii* (Maiden's blue gum), which may occur in transitional stands with adjacent communities in which they are more common, and *E. viminalis* (ribbon gum) associated with lower slopes adjacent to major streamlines.

The understorey often includes an open stratum of small trees dominated by *Acacia mearnsii* (black wattle), *A. implexa* (hickory wattle) or *Exocarpos cupressiformis* (native cherry) and an open shrub stratum that commonly includes *Bursaria spinosa* (blackthorn), *Cassinia* spp. and/or *Ozothamnus diosmifolius* (rice flower). Shrubs may attain high densities in localised areas in response to changes in grazing or fire regimes.

The grassy ground cover is dominated by *Themeda triandra* (kangaroo grass), *Microlaena stipoides* var. *stipoides* (weeping grass), *Eragrostis leptostachya* (paddock lovegrass) and *Echinopogon ovatus* (forest hedgehog grass) with forbs such as *Dichondra repens* (kidney weed), *Grona varians* (slender tick trefoil), *Hydrocotyle laxiflora* (stinking pennywort), *Hypericum gramineum* (small St John's wort), *Glycine clandestina* and the fern *Cheilanthes sieberi* subsp. *sieberi* (poison rock fern).

The total species list of the community is larger than that given in Table 1, with many species present in only one or two sites or in low abundance. The species composition

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of a site will be influenced by factors including the size of the site, heterogeneity, seasonal conditions and disturbance history (including grazing, land clearing, historical timber harvesting, weed invasion and fire). The number and relative abundance of species will vary with time since fire and may also change in response to changes in fire frequency or grazing regime. At any one time, above-ground individuals of some species may be absent but be represented below ground in soil seed banks or as dormant structures such as bulbs, corms, rhizomes, rootstocks or lignotubers. The list of species (Table 1) is of vascular plant species, however the community also includes microorganisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse suite of vertebrate and invertebrate fauna. The mammalian and avian components of the fauna have been described by Lunney and Leary (1990) and Miles (2006). Other components of the community are poorly documented. Threatened species and populations that are currently considered likely to occur in Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion are listed in Appendix 3.

The structure of the community varies depending on past and current disturbances, particularly clearing and grazing. Contemporary tree-dominated stands of the community are largely relics or regrowth of previously cleared taller forests and woodlands, which may retain scattered shrubs and a largely continuous grassy groundcover. At some sites, mature trees may exceed 40 m, although regrowth stands may be shorter than 10 m. After total or partial clearing, the tree canopy may remain sparse or may regrow to form dense stands of saplings and small trees, which are typically associated with a ground layer of reduced cover and diversity. In some areas of the community, the overstorey and/or the mid-stratum may have been reduced or removed, effectively forming a derived grassland that may comprise a mixture of native and non-native grasses and forbs, including some of those listed in Table 1. Some other disturbed forms of the community may persist with the overstorey present and a mid- and/or ground-stratum with an abundance of introduced species.

Fauna species recorded in the community

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion can support a variety of fauna (CTSSC 2013) including larger mammalian herbivores (e.g., kangaroos and wombats), smaller ground-dwelling mammals (e.g., bandicoots and dasyurids), arboreal mammals (e.g., possums), bats, woodland birds and reptiles. Some characteristic reptiles of the ecological community include *Amphibolurus muricatus* (jacky lizard), *Pseudechis porphyriacus* (red-bellied black snake) and *Tiliqua scincoides* ssp. *scincoides* (blue tongued lizard).

Macropus giganteus (eastern grey kangaroo), *M. rufogriseus* (red-necked wallaby), *Tachyglossus aculeatus* (echidna), *Trichosurus vulpecula* (common brushtail possum), *Petaurus breviceps* (sugar glider), *Pseudocheirus peregrinus* (ringtail possum), *Vombatus ursinus* (wombat) and *Wallabia bicolor* (swamp wallaby) may be found in the ecological community, particularly where there are connecting strips of native vegetation linking farming land to the surrounding forests (Whelan and Hibberd 1992; Miles 2006). Insectivorous bats, including *Vespadelus* spp. (forest bats),

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Chalinolobus spp. (wattled bats) and *Nyctophilus* spp. (long-eared bats) may also be recorded in the ecological community, .

Phascolarctos cinereus (koala) (listed as Endangered under BC Act and EPBC Act) was once common in the forest red gum forests on fertile soils, including this ecological community, but it is now mostly confined to small, fragmented populations in surrounding forests (Miles 2006).

Table 1. Plant species characteristic of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion. Trees and shrubs listed here are those found in more than 10% of floristic plots attributable to this ecological community; groundlayer species are those found in more than 20% of plots. Expert elicitation provided additional species with diagnostic value for distinguishing this ecological community from adjoining communities in the vicinity. Source: DPE (2022a).

<i>Acacia implexa</i>	<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>
<i>Acaena echinata</i>	<i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i>
<i>Angophora floribunda</i>	<i>Anthosachne scabra</i>
<i>Austrostipa rudis</i> subsp. <i>nervosa</i>	<i>Bossiaea buxifolia</i>
<i>Breynia oblongifolia</i>	<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>
<i>Carex breviculmis</i>	<i>Carex inversa</i>
<i>Cassinia aculeata</i>	<i>Cassinia longifolia</i>
<i>Cassinia trinerva</i>	<i>Cheilanthes sieberi</i> subsp. <i>sieberi</i>
<i>Clematis glycinoides</i> var. <i>glycinoides</i>	<i>Cymbopogon refractus</i>
<i>Dianella revoluta</i> var. <i>revoluta</i>	<i>Dichelachne micrantha</i>
<i>Dichondra repens</i>	<i>Echinopogon caespitosus</i> var. <i>caespitosus</i>
<i>Echinopogon ovatus</i>	<i>Einadia hastata</i>
<i>Eragrostis leptostachya</i>	<i>Eucalyptus baueriana</i>
<i>Eucalyptus bosistoana</i>	<i>Eucalyptus globoidea</i>
<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i>
<i>Euchiton japonicus</i>	<i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>
<i>Galium leiocarpum</i>	<i>Geitonoplesium cymosum</i>
<i>Geranium solanderi</i> var. <i>solanderi</i>	<i>Glycine clandestina</i>
<i>Glycine tabacina</i>	<i>Grona varians</i>
<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	<i>Hydrocotyle laxiflora</i>
<i>Hypericum gramineum</i>	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i>
<i>Lepidosperma laterale</i>	<i>Lobelia purpurascens</i>
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	<i>Lomandra multiflora</i> subsp. <i>multiflora</i>
<i>Melicytus dentatus</i>	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i> var. <i>stipoides</i>
<i>Opercularia aspera</i>	<i>Opercularia varia</i>
<i>Oplismenus imbecillis</i>	<i>Oxalis perennans</i>
<i>Oxytes brachypoda</i>	<i>Ozothamnus argophyllus</i>
<i>Ozothamnus diosmifolius</i>	<i>Panicum effusum</i>
<i>Pellaea falcata</i>	<i>Persoonia linearis</i>
<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>	<i>Poa labillardierei</i> var. <i>labillardierei</i>

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Poa meionectes

Rubus parvifolius

Rytidosperma longifolium

Rytidosperma racemosum var. *racemosum*

Solanum pungetium

Veronica plebeia

Wahlenbergia gracilis

Pteridium esculentum

Rumex brownii

Rytidosperma pilosum

Sigesbeckia orientalis subsp. *orientalis*

Themeda triandra

Wahlenbergia communis

Zornia dyctiocarpa var. *dyctiocarpa*

Abiotic environment

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is associated with rain shadow areas of the far south coast hinterland of New South Wales. These rain shadow areas receive less rainfall than more elevated terrain that partially surrounds them, with mean annual rainfall typically in the range of 700–1,100mm. The community typically occurs in undulating terrain up to 500 m elevation on granitic substrates (e.g., adamellites, granites, granodiorites, gabbros, etc.) but may also occur on locally steep sites and on acid volcanic, alluvial and fine-grained sedimentary substrates.

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion may be juxtaposed with other communities depending on substrate, landform and aspect, e.g.: riparian forest along major drainage lines.

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion can occur at sites that are outside the range of these abiotic descriptors, providing the plant species assemblage is present and the remnant is within the South East Corner Bioregion. Abiotic descriptors provide supporting information only, and the community can only be identified with certainty by the assemblage of species occupying a particular area (Preston and Adam 2004).

Distribution

The assemblage of species described above characterises Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion. Within that bioregion, the ecological community is currently known to occur within the Bega Valley, Eurobodalla and Queanbeyan-Palerang Local Government Areas. Known occurrences suggest the community is largely confined to the South East Coastal Ranges IBRA subregion within the South East Corner Bioregion (Commonwealth DCCEEW 2024), though some limited occurrences may occur in other IBRA subregions within the South East Corner Bioregion.

Related woodlands to the north and east of this distribution, in the Sydney Basin Bioregion and Bateman IBRA subregion of the South East Corner Bioregion, receive higher mean annual rainfall 900–1,300 mm (DPE 2022a) and have different assemblages of species, including those attributable to another threatened ecological

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community, Illawarra and South Coast Lowland Forest and Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions.

Historically, Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion was most extensive in the Bega and Cobargo valleys with smaller patches around Belowra and in the upper Towamba Valley (CTSSC 2013). Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion has been cleared or substantially modified by farming and development and no unmodified examples remain. Remnants of the ecological community are largely confined to private property or small public reserves such as Travelling Stock Reserves, cemeteries and roadsides (CTSSC 2013).

Threats

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is threatened by clearing and fragmentation, weed invasion, livestock grazing and pasture management, climate change, rural tree dieback and the disruption of ecological processes associated with a loss of key biota. The impacts from these threats may occur independently from each other or interact (Figure 1). Fragmentation of habitat, overgrazing and erosion, changes in structure and species composition, loss of key fauna, and the loss of large trees which provide habitat resources for a range of fauna, disrupt ecological processes and contribute to a large reduction in the functioning of the ecological community, increasing the risk of ecological collapse.

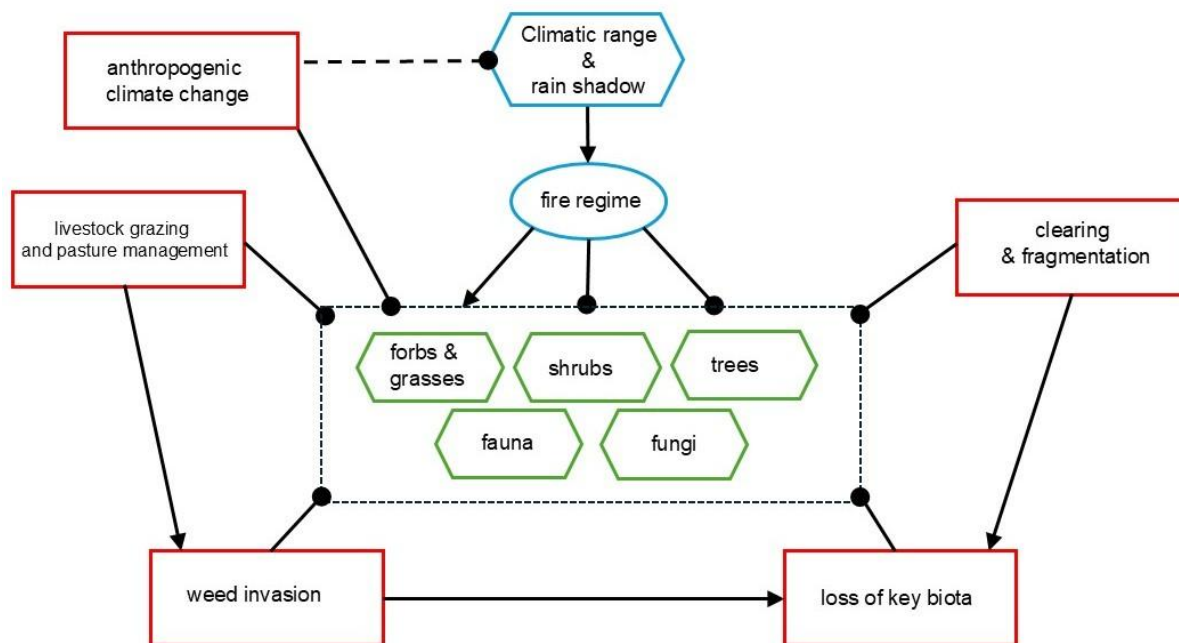


Figure 1. Conceptual model depicting key ecosystem components and drivers of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion and the threats leading to ecosystem collapse. Characteristic biota is represented by green hexagons contained within the dashed box, elements of the abiotic environment by a blue hexagon, abiotic processes by a blue oval, and threats

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by red rectangles. Pointed arrowheads represent a positive effect; rounded arrowheads represent a negative effect. Dotted arrow lines indicate uncertainty in the outcome or effect.

Clearing and fragmentation

Since European settlement, and relative to the longevity of its dominant trees which live for several hundred years, Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion has undergone a large reduction in geographic distribution due to clearing (Keith and Bedward 1999, Thomas *et al.* 2000, Tindall *et al.* 2004, Tozer *et al.* 2010). The total remaining mapped extent of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is estimated to be less than 14,000 ha, representing approximately 20% of its projected area at the time of European settlement (Tozer *et al.* 2010).

Clearing of the ecological community has not been evenly distributed across its range. For example, Keith and Bedward (1999) estimated that less than 10% remains of Candelo Dry Grass Forest, a map unit occurring in the western parts of the Bega and Towamba valleys and included within Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion (Appendix 2). Mapping carried out by Keith and Bedward (1999) was at a coarser resolution than Tozer *et al.* (2010) and omitted a number of smaller patches of the ecological community in this region. Almost all of the remaining area of the ecological community occurs on private land or on public easements, where its geographic distribution is undergoing a continuing decline largely due to small-scale clearing. 'Clearing of native vegetation' is listed as a Key Threatening Process under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. 'Land clearance' is listed as a Key Threatening Process under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Extensive clearing of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion has resulted in fragmentation and loss of ecological connectivity. The remaining area of the ecological community is severely fragmented, with more than 95% of mapped extant patches estimated to be less than 10 ha (Tozer *et al.* 2010). The integrity and persistence of small, isolated stands is limited by the small population size of many component species, enhanced risks from environmental stochasticity, disruption to pollination and dispersal of fruits or seeds, and likely reductions in the genetic diversity of isolated populations (Young *et al.* 1996, Young and Clarke 2000). Fragmentation also results in altered fire frequencies within some patches, which may reduce the viability of some native plant populations (Clarke 2000).

Weed invasion

Weed invasion poses a major threat to Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion, with introduced perennial grasses having particularly serious impacts (Miles 2002). Several of these introduced species, particularly grasses, form a dense ground layer capable of smothering indigenous plants, reducing both reproduction and survival, as well as limiting recruitment of larger

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woody plants and reducing habitat quality for a wide range of native invertebrate and vertebrate fauna. The invasion and establishment of introduced plant species in Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion, results in a large reduction in the function of the ecological community (Crosthwaite and Dorrough 2014; Schlienzauer *et al.* 2021). 'Invasion of native plant communities by exotic perennial grasses' is listed as a Key Threatening Process under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

Livestock grazing and pasture management

Moderate to heavy nutrient enrichment and grazing of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion, by livestock and the feral European rabbit, results in the decline and disappearance of palatable native plant species, including shrubs and herbs, and compaction and erosion of topsoil, making it difficult for a diverse native understorey to re-establish (Dorrough *et al.* 2004). The effects of such overgrazing may be exacerbated under drought conditions. 'Competition and grazing by the feral European Rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*' is listed as a Key Threatening Process under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

Disruption of ecological processes associated with loss of key fauna

Almost all of the remaining area of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is regrowth forest and woodland from past clearing activities (Miles 2006). Some of the area of the ecological community, that is now devoid of trees and shrubs, retains a substantial suite of native grasses and herbs in the ground layer.

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion has undergone a very substantial loss of native mammal fauna since European settlement. This is best documented in the Bega Valley, where Lunney and Leary (1988) concluded, after an examination of historical and contemporary records, that at least six native mammal species had become locally extinct, including the Wallaroo (*Macropus robustus*), the Parma Wallaby (*Macropus parma*), the red-necked Pademelon (*Thylogale thetis*), the Tasmanian Bettong (*Bettongia gaimardi*), the Eastern Quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) and the Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*). The loss of habitat, invasion by feral predators and hunting activities were implicated as causes of these extinctions. Other species have undergone catastrophic population declines, *e.g.*, koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), and sugar glider (*Petaurus brevipes*). Native mammals play a key role in managing invertebrate impacts on already stressed trees (*e.g.*, Smith 1982).

Tall, hollow-bearing trees approximating the stature of the plant community prior to European settlement remain principally as isolated individuals within paddocks. These and other remnant and regrowth trees suffer episodes of elevated mortality related to drought and xylem hydraulic failure, climate change, eutrophication via fertiliser application and drift, and recurring insect attack consistent with rural tree decline (Reid and Landsberg 2000; Nolan *et al.* 2021).

Ecological degradation

Due to the threats outlined above, which often act in combination, the condition of remaining occurrences of the ecological community ranges from relatively intact to highly degraded. Some remnants of the ecological community may consist of a degraded or partially degraded overstorey, understorey or both, but may still support important floral and faunal elements of the assemblage of species.

Number of threat-defined locations

Local planning and land zoning are determined by local governments in the context of state planning policies. Local environmental plans provide a framework that guides planning decisions and development controls. The most serious plausible threat to Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is land clearing and vegetation fragmentation facilitated by local government development approvals, and then subsequent degradation of remnants due to weed invasion, livestock grazing and pasture management, and the disruption of ecological processes associated with a loss of key fauna. Three LGAs (Bega Valley, Eurobodalla and Queanbeyan-Palerang) are known to contain Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion. Tozer *et al.* (2010) estimated 780 ha of the ecological community to also occur in conservation reserves. Given that the LGAs are primarily rural and regulated under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*, the ecological community is estimated to occur at 2–4 threat-defined locations as per the IUCN (2024) definition.

Assessment against IUCN Red List of Ecosystems criteria

For this assessment it is considered that the survey of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion has been adequate and there is sufficient scientific evidence to support the listing outcome. The IUCN Red List protocol uses thresholds of ecosystem collapse defined as reference points for ecosystem-specific indicators in order to assess the status of an ecological community. IUCN (2024) defines ecosystem collapse as “a transformation of identity, a loss of key defining biotic or abiotic features, and a replacement by a different ecosystem type or anthropogenic environments”.

Criterion A Reduction in Geographic Distribution

An ecosystem may be listed under criterion A if it meets the thresholds for any of four subcriteria (A1, A2a, A2b or A3), quantified as a reduction in geographic distribution.

Criterion A. Reduction in geographic distribution over ANY of the following time periods:				
	A1. the past 50 years	A2a. the next 50 years	A2b. any 50 year period including the past, present and future	A3. since 1750
CR	≥ 80%	≥ 80%	≥ 80%	≥ 90%
EN	≥ 50%	≥ 50%	≥ 50%	≥ 70%
VU	≥ 30%	≥ 30%	≥ 30%	≥ 50%

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Assessment Outcome: Endangered under Criterion A3, insufficient information to assess Criteria A1 and A2.

Justification: Under this criterion, the ecological community is interpreted to have collapsed when its mapped extent declines to zero. The total remaining area of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is estimated to be less than 14,000 ha, representing approximately an 80% reduction in its projected area since the time of European settlement (Tozer *et al.* 2010). Annual woody vegetation change detection data for 2017–2021 suggests further low levels (c. 168 ha) of clearing of the ecological community (DPE 2022b). The estimate of decline lies within the thresholds that delimit the Endangered category (70–90% of pre-European extent) representing a large reduction in geographic distribution over the historical time frame.

There is insufficient information to assess change in the distribution of the ecological community in the past 50 years (Criterion A1), in the next 50 years (Criterion A2a) or in any 50-year period (Criterion A2b).

Criterion B Geographic range

An ecosystem may be listed under criterion B if it meets the thresholds for any of three subcriteria (B1, B2 and B3), which indicate restricted geographic distribution.

Criterion B. Restricted geographic distribution indicated by ANY OF B1, B2 or B3:	
CR	<p>B1. Extent of a minimum convex polygon enclosing all occurrences (extent of occurrence, EOO) is no larger than:</p> <p>2,000 km²</p> <p>AND at least one of the following (a-c):</p> <p>(a) An observed or inferred continuing decline in ANY OF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a measure of spatial extent appropriate to the ecosystem; OR ii. a measure of environmental quality appropriate to characteristic biota of the ecosystem; OR iii. a measure of disruption to biotic interactions appropriate to the characteristic biota of the ecosystem. <p>(b) Observed or inferred threatening processes that are likely to cause continuing declines in geographic distribution, environmental quality or biotic interactions within the next 20 years.</p> <p>(c) Ecosystem exists at <u>1 location</u></p>
EN	<p>B1. Extent of a minimum convex polygon enclosing all occurrences (extent of occurrence, EOO) is no larger than:</p> <p>20,000 km²</p> <p>AND at least one of the following (a-c):</p> <p>(a) An observed or inferred continuing decline in ANY OF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a measure of spatial extent appropriate to the ecosystem; OR ii. a measure of environmental quality appropriate to characteristic biota of the ecosystem; OR iii. a measure of disruption to biotic interactions appropriate to the characteristic biota of the ecosystem. <p>(b) Observed or inferred threatening processes that are likely to cause continuing declines in geographic distribution, environmental quality or biotic interactions within the next 20 years.</p> <p>(c) Ecosystem exists at <u>≤ 5 locations</u></p>
VU	<p>B1. Extent of a minimum convex polygon enclosing all occurrences (extent of occurrence, EOO) is no larger than:</p> <p>50,000 km²</p> <p>AND at least one of the following (a-c):</p> <p>(a) An observed or inferred continuing decline in ANY OF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a measure of spatial extent appropriate to the ecosystem; OR ii. a measure of environmental quality appropriate to characteristic biota of the ecosystem; OR iii. a measure of disruption to biotic interactions appropriate to the characteristic biota of the ecosystem. <p>(b) Observed or inferred threatening processes that are likely to cause continuing declines in geographic distribution, environmental quality or biotic interactions within the next 20 years.</p> <p>(c) Ecosystem exists at <u>≤ 10 locations</u></p>

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B2. The number of 10 × 10 km grid cells occupied (area of occupancy, AOO) is no more than:		
CR	2	<p>AND at least one of the following (a-c):</p> <p>(a) An observed or inferred continuing decline in ANY OF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a measure of spatial extent appropriate to the ecosystem; OR ii. a measure of environmental quality appropriate to characteristic biota of the ecosystem; OR iii. a measure of disruption to biotic interactions appropriate to the characteristic biota of the ecosystem. <p>(b) Observed or inferred threatening processes that are likely to cause continuing declines in geographic distribution, environmental quality or biotic interactions within the next 20 years.</p> <p>(c) Ecosystem exists at <u>1 location</u></p>
EN	20	<p>AND at least one of the following (a-c):</p> <p>(a) An observed or inferred continuing decline in ANY OF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a measure of spatial extent appropriate to the ecosystem; OR ii. a measure of environmental quality appropriate to characteristic biota of the ecosystem; OR iii. a measure of disruption to biotic interactions appropriate to the characteristic biota of the ecosystem. <p>(b) Observed or inferred threatening processes that are likely to cause continuing declines in geographic distribution, environmental quality or biotic interactions within the next 20 years.</p> <p>(c) Ecosystem exists at <u>≤ 5 locations</u></p>
VU	50	<p>AND at least one of the following (a-c):</p> <p>(a) An observed or inferred continuing decline in ANY OF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a measure of spatial extent appropriate to the ecosystem; OR ii. a measure of environmental quality appropriate to characteristic biota of the ecosystem; OR iii. a measure of disruption to biotic interactions appropriate to the characteristic biota of the ecosystem <p>(b) Observed or inferred threatening processes that are likely to cause continuing declines in geographic distribution, environmental quality or biotic interactions within the next 20 years.</p> <p>(c) Ecosystem exists at <u>≤ 10 locations</u></p>

VU	<p>B3. The number of locations is:</p> <p>Very small (generally fewer than 5) AND prone to the effects of human activities or stochastic events within a very short time period in an uncertain future, and thus capable of Collapse or becoming Critically Endangered within a very short time period (B3 can only lead to a listing as VU).</p>
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Assessment Outcome: Endangered under Criterion B1a(i)bc; Vulnerable under Criterion B3.

Justification: The geographic distribution of Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is moderately to highly restricted. Mapping of the Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion (map unit e20p229 of Tozer *et al.* 2010) predicts the extent of occurrence (EOO) to be 8,467 km² based on a minimum convex polygon enclosing known occurrences of the ecological community, the method of assessment recommended by IUCN (2024). The area of occupancy (AOO) was estimated to be 66 grid cells (10 x 10 km), by counting the number of cells occupied, excluding those that account cumulatively for less than 1% of the total mapped extant area of the ecological community, as recommended for assessing AOO by IUCN (2024). The ecological community is estimated to occur at 2–4 threat-defined locations as per the IUCN (2024) definition. This EOO and subcriteria meet the thresholds for the category of

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Endangered under Criterion B1a(i)bc. The AOO does not meet the threshold for Vulnerable under Criterion B2.

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is subject to observed and inferred threatening processes (described above) that are likely to cause continuing declines in geographic distribution and biotic interactions within the next 20 years. Although at a reduced level compared to historical rates, there is evidence that clearing of remaining vegetation continues to occur across the distribution of the ecological community, for agriculture and infrastructure developments (DPE 2022b; Tozer *et al.* 2010). Most of the ecological community's extant distribution is within private land tenures and much of its area is likely to be subject to ongoing grazing by livestock, with consequent disruptions to biotic interactions including trampling and suppression of plant regeneration, reduction in species composition and invasion by introduced plant species (Crosthwaite and Dorrrough 2014; Schlienzauer *et al.* 2021).

Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is eligible to be listed as Vulnerable under Criterion B3 because the majority of the bounded range of threat-defined locations is <5 (*i.e.*, 2–4) and the ecological community is subject to observed and inferred threatening processes that may cause it to undergo collapse within a very short timeframe (*c.* 20 years).

Criterion C Environmental Degradation

An ecosystem may be listed under Criterion C if it meets the thresholds for any of four subcriteria (C1, C2a, C2b, or C3), which express different levels of environmental degradation over different time frames.

Criterion C. Environmental degradation over ANY of the following time periods:				
	Extent (%)	Relative severity (%)		
		≥ 80	≥ 50	≥ 30
C1. The past 50 years, based on change in an abiotic variable affecting a fraction of the extent of the ecosystem and with relative severity, as indicated by the following table:	≥ 80	CR	EN	VU
	≥ 50	EN	VU	
	≥ 30	VU		
C2a. The next 50 years, based on change in an abiotic variable affecting a fraction of the extent of the ecosystem and with relative severity, as indicated by the following table; OR	≥ 80	CR	EN	VU
	≥ 50	EN	VU	
	≥ 30	VU		
C2b. Any 50-year period including the past, present and future, based on change in an abiotic variable affecting a fraction of the extent of the ecosystem and with relative severity, as indicated by the following table:	≥ 80	CR	EN	VU
	≥ 50	EN	VU	
	≥ 30	VU		
C3. Since 1750, based on change in an abiotic variable affecting a fraction of the extent of the ecosystem and with relative severity, as indicated by the following table:	≥ 90	CR	EN	VU
	≥ 70	EN	VU	
	≥ 50	VU		

Assessment Outcome: The status of the Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion under all criteria C1, C2 and C3 is Data Deficient.

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Justification: Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion has been and continues to be subject to a number of threatening processes including adverse fire regimes, eutrophication of soils and climate change. These processes are likely to have caused, and will continue to cause, environmental degradation of the ecological community.

Changes in abiotic properties that cause environmental degradation of the ecological community are also likely to have included widespread application of chemical fertilisers to facilitate conversion from native to introduced pasture and maintenance of that pasture (e.g., Dorrough 2012; Fulkerson *et al.* 2010), with consequent elevated soil nitrogen levels. However, no quantitative estimate of severity or impact of changes in abiotic variables is available across the distribution of the ecological community. There is currently insufficient data to quantify the extent and relative severity of environmental degradation related to these threats.

Criterion D Disruption of biotic processes or interactions

An ecosystem may be listed under Criterion D if it meets the thresholds for any of four subcriteria (D1, D2a, D2b, or D3), which express different levels of biotic disruption.

Criterion D. Disruption of biotic processes or interactions over ANY of the following time periods:				
D1. The past 50 years, based on change in a biotic variable affecting a fraction of the extent of the ecosystem and with relative severity, as indicated by the following table:		Relative severity (%)		
	Extent (%)	≥ 80	≥ 50	≥ 30
	≥ 80	CR	EN	VU
	≥ 50	EN	VU	
	≥ 30	VU		
D2a. The next 50 years, based on change in a biotic variable affecting a fraction of the extent of the ecosystem and with relative severity, as indicated by the following table; OR		Relative severity (%)		
	Extent (%)	≥ 80	≥ 50	≥ 30
	≥ 80	CR	EN	VU
	≥ 50	EN	VU	
	≥ 30	VU		
D2b. Any 50-year period including the past, present and future, based on change in a biotic variable affecting a fraction of the extent of the ecosystem and with relative severity, as indicated by the following table:		Relative severity (%)		
	Extent (%)	≥ 80	≥ 50	≥ 30
	≥ 80	CR	EN	VU
	≥ 50	EN	VU	
	≥ 30	VU		
D3. Since 1750, based on change in a biotic variable affecting a fraction of the extent of the ecosystem and with relative severity, as indicated by the following table:		Relative severity (%)		
	Extent (%)	≥ 90	≥ 70	≥ 50
	≥ 90	CR	EN	VU
	≥ 70	EN	VU	
	≥ 50	VU		

Assessment Outcome: The status of the Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion under all criteria is Data Deficient.

Justification: There is insufficient information to assess disruption of biotic properties of the ecological community under Criterion D. Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion is subject to a number of threatening processes (*i.e.*, fragmentation, degradation, weed invasion, loss of key fauna, and feral animals) that have caused declines in biotic processes. There is some evidence that a moderate to high proportion of the many small remnants are subject

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to ongoing disruption, including loss of native plant and animal species, reduced vegetation structural complexity and disruption of ecological processes, through the interacting effects of plant community fragmentation, livestock grazing, rural tree decline, feral predators and weed invasion (DPE 2022b; Lunney and Leary 1988; Keith 1995; Miles 2002, 2006), but data on the spatial extent and rates of decline are not available.

Criterion E Quantitative Analysis

An ecosystem may be listed under Criterion E if it meets the thresholds for the criterion, a quantitative analysis that estimates the probability of ecosystem collapse to be:

Criterion E. Quantitative analysis that estimates the probability of ecosystem collapse to be:	
CR	≥ 50% within 50 years
EN	≥ 20% within 50 years
VU	≥ 10% within 50 years

Assessment Outcome: Data Deficient.

Justification: Data sufficient to allow a quantitative analysis of ecosystem collapse to be carried out for Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion are not currently available.

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APPENDIX 1

Assessment against Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017 criteria

The Clauses used for assessment are listed below for reference.

Overall Assessment Outcome: Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion was found to be eligible for listing as Endangered under Clauses 4.9(b) and 4.10(b)(d i)(e)(f ii). The ecological community was also found to be Near Threatened under Clause 4.12.

Clause 4.9 – Reduction in geographic distribution of ecological community (Equivalent to IUCN criterion A)

Assessment Outcome: Endangered under Clause 4.9(b)

The ecological community has undergone or is likely to undergo within a time frame appropriate to the life cycle and habitat characteristics of its component species:			
	(a)	for critically endangered ecological communities	a very large reduction in geographic distribution
	(b)	for endangered ecological communities	a large reduction in geographic distribution
	(c)	for vulnerable ecological communities	a moderate reduction in geographic distribution

Clause 4.10 - Restricted geographic distribution of ecological community (Equivalent to IUCN criterion B)

Assessment Outcome: Endangered under Clause 4.10(b)(d i)(e)(f ii)

The ecological community's geographic distribution is:			
	(a)	for critically endangered ecological communities	very highly restricted
	(b)	for endangered ecological communities	highly restricted
	(c)	for vulnerable ecological communities	moderately restricted
and at least 1 of the following conditions apply:			
	(d)	there is a projected or continuing decline in any of the following:	
		(i)	a measure of spatial extent appropriate to the ecological community,

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		(ii)	a measure of environmental quality appropriate to the characteristic biota of the ecological community,	
		(iii)	a measure of disruption to biotic interactions appropriate to the characteristic biota of the ecological community,	
	(e)	There are threatening processes that are likely to cause continuing decline in either geographic distribution, environmental quality or biotic interactions within the near future,		
	(f)	The ecological community exists at:		
		(i)	for critically endangered ecological communities	an extremely low number of locations
		(ii)	for endangered ecological communities	a very low number of locations
		(iii)	for vulnerable ecological communities	a low number of locations

**Clause 4.11 – Environmental degradation of ecological community
(Equivalent to IUCN criterion Clause C)**

Assessment Outcome: Data Deficient

The ecological community has undergone or is likely to undergo within a time span appropriate to the life cycle and habitat characteristics of its component species:				
	(a)	for critically endangered ecological communities	a very large degree of environmental degradation	
	(b)	for endangered ecological communities	a large degree of environmental degradation	
	(c)	for vulnerable ecological communities	a moderate degree of environmental degradation	

Clause 4.12 – Disruption of biotic processes or interactions in ecological community

(Equivalent to IUCN criterion D)

Assessment Outcome: Data Deficient

The ecological community has undergone or is likely to undergo within a time frame appropriate to the life cycle and habitat characteristics of its component species:				
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	(a)	for critically endangered ecological communities	a very large disruption of biotic processes or interactions
	(b)	for endangered ecological communities	a large disruption of biotic processes or interactions
	(c)	for vulnerable ecological communities	a moderate disruption of biotic processes or interactions

Clause 4.13 – Quantitative analysis of probability of collapse of ecological community

(Equivalent to IUCN criterion E)

Assessment Outcome: Data Deficient

The probability of collapse of the ecological community is estimated to be:			
	(a)	for critically endangered species	extremely high
	(b)	for endangered ecological communities	very high
	(c)	for vulnerable species	high

Professor Angela Moles, FRSN
Chairperson
NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee

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APPENDIX 2

Vegetation types, from various sources, that are wholly or partly recognised as within Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion. The EPBC Act-listed 'Lowland Grassy Woodland in the South East Corner Bioregion ecological community' also corresponds wholly or partially (from CTSSC 2016).

Source	Vegetation types with which the ecological community corresponds wholly or partially
Keith and Bedward (1999)	Candelo and Bega Dry Grass Forest combined.
Tindall <i>et al.</i> (2004)	map unit 34 South Coast Grassy Woodland
Gellie (2005)	vegetation Group 50 Southern Escarpment Herb/Grass Dry Forest; vegetation Group 54 Far South Coast Forest Red Gum Grass/Herb Dry Forest/Woodland.
Tozer <i>et al.</i> (2010)	e20p229 Southeast Lowland Grassy Woodland.
NSW Plant Community Types (DPE 2022a)	PCT 3325 South Coast Valley Flats Ribbon Gum Forest; PCT 3332 Southeast Lowland Grassy Woodland; PCT 4138 Araluen Valley Flats Red Gum Forest.

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APPENDIX 3

Threatened species and populations that may occur in Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland in the South East Corner Bioregion (DPE 2022a; CTSSC 2013). CR = Critically Endangered; EN = Endangered; VU = Vulnerable.

Flora	Common name	BC Act	EPBC Act
<i>Acacia georgensis</i>	Dr George Mountain wattle	VU	VU
<i>Correa baeuerlenii</i>	chef's hat correa	VU	VU
<i>Eucalyptus kartzoffiana</i>	Araluen gum	VU	VU
<i>Leucochrysum albicans</i> var. <i>tricolor</i>	hoary sunray	EN	EN
<i>Pomaderris cotoneaster</i>	cotoneaster pomaderris	EN	EN
<i>Thesium australe</i>	austral toadflax	VU	VU
<i>Zieria adenophora</i>	Araluen zieria	CR	CR
<i>Zieria tuberculata</i>		VU	VU

Fauna	Common name	BC Act	EPBC Act
<i>Anthochaera phrygia</i>	regent honeyeater	CR	CR
<i>Artamus cyanopterus cyanopterus</i>	dusky woodswallow	VU	
<i>Burhinus grallarius</i>	bush stone-curlew	EN	
<i>Callocephalon fimbriatum</i>	gang-gang cockatoo	EN	EN
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami lathami</i>	glossy black cockatoo	VU	VU
<i>Cercartetus nanus</i>	eastern pygmy possum	VU	
<i>Chalinolobus dwyeri</i>	large-eared pied bat	EN	EN
<i>Chthonicola sagittata</i>	Speckled Warbler	VU	
<i>Circus assimilis</i>	spotted harrier	VU	
<i>Climacteris picumnus victoriae</i>	brown treecreeper	VU	VU
<i>Daphoenositta chrysoptera</i>	varied sittella	VU	
<i>Dasyurus maculatus</i>	spotted-tailed quoll	VU	EN
<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	black-necked stork	EN	
<i>Falco subniger</i>	black falcon	VU	
<i>Glossopsitta pusilla</i>	little lorikeet	VU	

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Fauna	Common name	BC Act	EPBC Act
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	white-bellied sea eagle	VU	
<i>Heleioporus australiacus</i>	giant burrowing frog	VU	VU
<i>Hieraaetus morphnoides</i>	little eagle	VU	
<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	swift parrot	EN	CR
<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	square-tailed kite	VU	
<i>Melithreptus gularis gularis</i>	black-chinned honeyeater	VU	
<i>Micronomus norfolkensis</i>	eastern coastal free-tailed bat	VU	
<i>Myotis macropus</i>	southern myotis	VU	
<i>Ninox connivens</i>	barking owl	VU	
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	powerful owl	VU	
<i>Pandion cristatus</i>	eastern osprey	VU	
<i>Petauroides volans</i>	greater glider	EN	EN
<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>	squirrel glider	VU	
<i>Petroica boodang</i>	scarlet robin	VU	
<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i>	brush-tailed phascogale	VU	
<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>	koala	EN	EN
<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	grey-headed flying fox	VU	VU
<i>Sminthopsis leucopus</i>	white-footed dunnart	VU	
<i>Stagonopleura guttata</i>	diamond firetail	VU	VU
<i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i>	Australian masked owl	VU	
<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>	sooty owl	VU	