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## Media Release

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### **Tasmanian Lowland Native Grasslands protected under EPBC Act – Peter Garrett congratulated on historic act**

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust today congratulated Australian Government Minister for the Environment Peter Garrett's decision on 25 June 2009 to list Lowland Native Grasslands of Tasmania as a critically endangered ecological community under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

"Lowland native grasslands are probably Tasmania's most endangered vegetation type but have had no legal protection until Minister Garrett's decision," said TCT Acting Director Peter McGlone.

"Minister Garrett's decision is incredibly important because the State Government deliberately excluded lowland grasslands communities from protection under state legislation in 2007."

Lowland grasslands communities were excluded from the list of threatened native vegetation communities established by the State Government in 2007 under the provisions of the State Nature Conservation Act. This occurred even though they were one of the most threatened Tasmanian communities.

"Listing lowland native grasslands on the EPBC Act will protect 60 state-listed and 25 nationally listed threatened animal and plant species as well as securing the vegetation community.

"Until Minister Garrett's decision, lowland grassland remnants in Tasmania had no legal protection and landowners could legally clear them without obtaining approvals. Permits were also granted by the State Government for destruction of state-listed species that inhabited native grasslands. This will now change for areas covered by Minister Garrett's decision.

“As a co-author of the original nomination in 2005 (along with the Humane Society International), the TCT is immensely proud to have contributed to such an important environmental outcome for Tasmania. Once more we see the vital need for national environmental laws to fill gaps existing in state legislation.

“The TCT hopes that the farming community accepts this decision and collaborates with the Australian Government to ensure grasslands are protected and appropriately managed.”

**Key facts regarding Tasmanian Lowland Native Grasslands and Minister Garrett’s decision:**

- 83% of Tasmanian native lowland grasslands have been cleared over the last two hundred years.
- Tasmanian lowland native grasslands are habitat for 60 species listed on the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act and 25 species listed as threatened on the EPBC Act – including the Tasmanian devil, spotted-tailed quoll, numerous orchid and lily species as well as grasses.
- 21,000 hectares of lowland grassland remains in Tasmania but it is highly fragmented: 76% of patches are less than 10 hectares.
- Highly degraded and very small grassland patches have been excluded from the listed ecological community.
- The Minister’s decision followed extensive expert and public consultation and consideration of advice from the National Threatened Species Scientific Committee.
- Minister Garrett’s department will prepare information booklets to help farmers and other stakeholders to understand the reasons for, and implications of, the listing and explain how to recognise and manage the ecological community.

**Further information**

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