

A statement for the purposes of approved conservation advice  
(s266B of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

## Approved Conservation Advice for *Epacris barbata* (Bearded Heath)

This Conservation Advice has been developed based on the best available information at the time this conservation advice was approved.

### Description

*Epacris barbata*, Family Epacridaceae, also known as the Bearded Heath and Freycinet Heath is an erect multi-stemmed shrub growing up to 2 metres. The species has small hard leaves that are prickly to touch and small white flowers that occur in clusters at the ends of the branches.

### Conservation Status

Bearded Heath is listed as **endangered**. This species is eligible for listing endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act) as it has a restricted geographic distribution and is susceptible to dieback caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. All known subpopulations of Bearded Heath are threatened by dieback to varying degrees (TSSC, 2006).

The species is also listed as endangered under the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* (Tasmania).

### Distribution and Habitat

Bearded Heath occurs on the Freycinet Peninsula and Schouten Island on the central east coast of Tasmania. It is known from 15 subpopulations that cover an estimated area of occupancy of 1.5 km<sup>2</sup> and estimated extent of occurrence of 120-130 km<sup>2</sup> (Threatened Species Section, DPIW, unpublished data, 2006). The total number of mature individuals of Bearded Heath is approximately 95 000 mature individuals (Keith 1997; Threatened Species Section DPIW, unpublished data, 2006). The Bearded Heath has undergone a very severe reduction in population size due to dieback caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. This species occurs within the South Tasmania Natural Resource Management Region.

The distribution of this species overlaps with the “*Eucalyptus ovata*–*Callitris oblonga* Forest” EPBC Act-listed threatened ecological community.

### Threats

The main identified threat to Bearded Heath is dieback caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

The main potential threat to Bearded Heath is inappropriate fire regimes, such as over-frequent or infrequent burning.

### Research Priorities

Research priorities that would inform future regional and local priority actions include:

- More precisely assess population size, distribution and the rate of population growth or decline.

### **Regional and Local Priority Actions**

The following regional and local priority recovery and threat abatement actions can be done to support the recovery of Bearded Heath.

#### Fire

- Develop and implement a suitable fire management strategy for Bearded Heath.
- Identify appropriate intensity and interval of fire to promote seed germination and vegetation regeneration.

#### Enable Recovery of Additional Sites and/or Populations

- Undertake appropriate seed collection and storage.

#### Diseases, Fungi and Parasites

- Develop and implement suitable hygiene protocols to protect known sites from further outbreaks of dieback caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.
- Implement appropriate management actions to minimise the adverse impacts of existing *Phytophthora cinnamomi* infestations.

This list does not necessarily encompass all actions that may be of benefit to Bearded Heath, but highlights those that are considered to be of highest priority at the time of preparing the conservation advice.

### **Existing Plans/Management Prescriptions that are Relevant to the Species**

- Draft Flora Recovery Plan: Threatened Tasmanian Forest Epacrids (Threatened Species Section 2007).
- Conservation of Tasmanian Plant Species & Communities Threatened by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* — Strategic Regional Plan for Tasmania (Schahinger et al., 2003).

These prescriptions were current at the time of publishing; please refer to the relevant agency's website for any updated versions.

### **Information Sources**

Keith, D. (1997). *The distribution and population status of rare Tasmanian forest Epacrids*. Unpublished report, Nature Conservation Branch, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Hobart.

Schahinger R, Rudman T and Wardlaw T (2003). Conservation of Tasmanian Plant Species & Communities threatened by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. Strategic Regional Plan for Tasmania. Technical Report 03/03, Nature Conservation Branch, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Hobart.

Threatened Species Section (2006). Unpublished survey data for *Epacris barbata*. Department of Primary Industries and Water, Hobart.

Threatened Species Section (2007). Draft Flora Recovery Plan: Threatened Tasmanian Forest Epacrids 2007–2011. Department of Primary Industries and Water, Hobart.

TSSC 2006 (Threatened Species Scientific Committee) (2006). Listing advice for *Epacris barbata* (Bearded Heath).