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Giessen, 07 September 2018

The Hon Melissa Price MP
Minister for the Environment
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Price,

We are writing on behalf of the International Ornithologists' Union working group for parrots, which is comprised of research scientists, conservation biologists, journalists and parrot breeders, some who live in Australia, all who are dedicated to preserving the continued existence of all parrot species worldwide.

After reading a recent news story in the Sydney Morning Herald ("Parrot on verge of annihilation poses first hurdle for new Environment Minister"; 4 September 2018), we learned that 2000 hectares at Kingvale Station on the Cape York Peninsula are scheduled to be razed for sorghum crops. This area is primarily eucalypt forest and melaleuca swampland that is essential habitat for the golden-shouldered parrot, *Psephotus chrysopterygius*, a native species found only on Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, and considered ENDANGERED under IUCN criteria (IUCN 2016). Kingvale Station on the Cape York Peninsula is their only home! Astonishingly, this bulldozing may proceed despite your own Department of Energy and Environment report warning that clearing this land will harm the continued survival of the parrot and eight other vulnerable and endangered species that live and breed there, including formerly widespread and common species like the koala, *Phascolarctos cinereus*, and northern quoll, *Dasyurus hallucatus*. Regarding the golden-shouldered parrot, the document states: "As the species is at very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future ... the proposed action is likely to have a significant effect on this species." Moreover, the IUCN strongly recommends securing land used by the golden-shouldered parrot under conservation agreements, developing and refining a pastoral management strategy that features reduced grazing and effective fire management, and finally, provision of supplemental food during the wet season to avoid species extinction (IUCN 2016). Bulldozing the forests and swamplands on Kingvale Station to develop cropland accomplishes none of these objectives.

According to your own Department of Energy and Environment report, the proposed sorghum plantations will also create "high amounts of fertilizer, including nitrogen and phosphorus", and fine sediments, that will run off into two nearby rivers that drain into the Great Barrier Reef, 200 kilometres downstream. This run-off will further damage water quality in this unique and already endangered ecosystem, despite the government's recently announced \$500 million rescue package to protect it.

We trust that, as Environment Minister, you will carry out your primary duty to protect and preserve Queensland's and Australia's biodiversity. Allowing this land to be cleared for sorghum crops will harm

vulnerable and endangered wildlife, damage the Great Barrier Reef, and could well be “the final nail in the coffin” for the endangered golden-shouldered parrot. Clearing this habitat is an irreversible tragedy that must not be allowed to occur. Is this the enduring legacy that you want for yourself and your administration?

Sincerely,

Juan F. Masello
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Devorah Bennu
research scientist and science journalist
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Relevant links:

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/parrot-on-verge-of-annihilation-poses-first-hurdle-for-new-environment-minister-20180903-p501fk.html>

tiny: <https://tinyurl.com/y7zrt2k4>

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/2018/03/29/how-to-write-an-effective-letter-to-your-mp/>

tiny: <https://tinyurl.com/ya4hq9bu>

Working Group on Psittaciformes: <http://psittaciformes.internationalornithology.org>

International Ornithologists' Union: <http://www.internationalornithology.org>

IUCN (2016), Red List Category & Criteria, Golden-shouldered Parrot: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22685150/0>

Golden-shouldered Parrot, distribution map: <http://maps.iucnredlist.org/map.html?id=22685150>