



Australian Government

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MEDIA RELEASE

Botanic Gardens receives endangered orchids

The Australian National Botanic Gardens has received over 300 orchids, including a number of critically endangered species, from Australia's CITES Management Authority. CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and offers protection to all wild orchids worldwide.

“The orchids will be used for research and display purposes and include species of *Paphiopedilum*, *Phalaenopsis*, *Dendrobium*, *Vanda*, *Cattleya* and *Oncidium*” said Dr Mark Clements, orchid research scientist with the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research (a collaborative venture between the Australian National Botanic Gardens and the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry).

“These orchids are very popular in horticulture and prized species are extremely valuable, but collecting from the wild has led some species to the brink of extinction” said Dr Clements.

CITES does not prohibit international trade in wildlife but regulates it through a system of permits. Under Australia's wildlife import and export laws, contained in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, it is illegal to import plants protected under CITES without the correct permits, which are issued if the trade is ecologically sustainable. The plants at the Botanic Gardens were allegedly smuggled into Australia in two separate shipments and without the correct permits.

Over 160 countries, including Australia, are signatories to CITES, and these countries work together to regulate international trade. Unregulated trade is one of the greatest threats to wild animals and plants in the world.

The Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage works closely with the Australian Customs Service and the Australian Federal Police to combat illegal wildlife trade activities.

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