



MEDIA RELEASE

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Old growth forest on the chopping block - definition of old growth jarrah quietly changed

The Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) has quietly changed the definition of old growth jarrah and reduced the amount of forest that must be protected as old growth.

The Barrabup 03 *Review of Old Growth Forest Status*¹ has just been released. It concluded that 1.2 hectares of old growth forest were cleared during logging preparations. A further 43 hectares have been found to be old growth and will now be protected from logging, along with 16 hectares of previously unmapped Diverse Ecotype Zones identified during the assessment.

“The WA Forest Alliance and the Barrabup Conservation Group reject this result,” said Jess Beckerling, convener of the WA Forest Alliance.

“Parts of Barrabup 03 that would have met the definition of old growth a few months ago are now on the chopping block because bureaucrats in the Department quietly changed the definition of old growth jarrah.

“Under the previous Conservation and Parks Commission definition, jarrah forest with five stumps per hectare and an intact canopy would be protected as old growth. Once DBCA was given responsibility for identifying old growth, it quietly weakened the definition to six stumps per 2-hectare block, with no consideration of canopy structure, making more ancient jarrah forest available for intensive logging.

“It is disgraceful that old growth forest was cleared for logging roads in Barrabup and the Minister is correct in his assessment that a review needs to be undertaken to ensure better protection of old growth forests in the future, but the review must be carried out by an independent authority.

“The agencies involved in the logging of the native forests are not taking care of the south-west’s unique and irreplaceable ecological and cultural values. A full independent review of High Conservation Value forest identification and protection is the only way to resolve these issues and ensure our precious south-west forests are being properly protected.

“The McGowan Government must act urgently on its commitment to protect High Conservation Value forest.

“Barrabup 03 is a magnificent old jarrah and marri forest many Nannup residents want saved. It is refuge for Forest Black Cockatoos, Quokkas and Chuditch as well as being a hotspot for Orchids and an amazing diversity and abundance of wildflowers. It is worth far more standing than it is logged,” said Ms Beckerling.

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¹ https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/images/documents/conservation-management/forests/barrabup_03_old-growth_forest_status_final_report.pdf