



MEDIA STATEMENT

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Figures confirm South West native forests worth more standing; conservationists call for transition plan.

An area of native forest 12 times the size of Kings Park was logged in 2017, primarily for woodchips, firewood and charcoal, and the government's logging agency, the Forest Products Commission (FPC), skidded across the financial year finish line with just \$350 000 profit to show for it.

These figures, published in the FPC's latest Annual Report, confirm that native forest logging in WA is no longer a profitable exercise. In 2014, 2015 and 2016 the sector operated at a financial loss (losses of \$3.8m, \$3.5m and \$0.9m respectively) and in 2017 and 2018 it scraped up meagre profits not worth the clear-fells they were gouged from (\$2m and \$0.3m respectively).

"There used to be an argument that conserving forests would be bad for the economy but this argument is over," said Jess Beckerling, convener of the WA Forest Alliance.

"Industry has stopped pretending native forest logging is profitable and instead says that, in spite of its failing financial condition, the government is committed to investing the money into the region to help buoy the local economy.

"It is important and appropriate that the Government commit money to the South West but it should be invested in a growing industry, not a dying one that is taking our forests and all of their values with it to its grave.

"Plantations and farm forestry are the future of the sector and Wafa's Forests For Life Plan for rebuilding the industry in farm forestry has been widely and enthusiastically supported. It would create more than 800 jobs in the regions where they matter and would provide WA with a substantial volume of high value timber while supporting food production and providing multiple landcare benefits..

Piers Verstegen, director of the Conservation Council of WA, said, "Research clearly shows that maintaining and protecting the world's native forests is critical to preventing global warming and maintaining global temperatures to less than 2 degrees warming.

"If we transitioned out of native forest logging we would not only help tackle climate change and protect wildlife currently threatened with extinction, but we could be generating substantially increased income for the State Government and Southwest economy through the sale of carbon credits," he said.

Previous estimates by the Australian National University (ANU) of the potential for carbon credit income from avoided deforestation is estimated at between \$16 million and \$438

million per year in WA. However this would require native forest logging to be phased out in the South West.

“We call on the McGowan Government to look seriously at the potential for carbon credit revenue from avoided deforestation as part of the Mid Term Performance Review of the Forest Management Plan, and before the FPC awards any further contracts for native forest logging,” said Mr Verstegen.

“The FPC’s current tender to sell an additional 150 000 m3 of karri and jarrah logs per year, which the agency would like to see locked in until 2033, must not be finalised by this government in the absence of up-to-date and robust climate and biodiversity science,” said Ms Beckerling.

“If you factor in the value of forests for wildlife, water, climate, amenity, tourism, honey production and culture, there is no disputing the fact that the forests are worth more standing now and into the future,” concluded Ms Beckerling.

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