



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### ***Timber volumes are a double-edged sword***

***31<sup>st</sup> December 2021***

Yesterday at 5pm, stakeholders were provided preliminary information on likely volumes of timber that will be available from a thinning program under the next 10-year Forest Management Plan (2024-2033).

There is good news and bad news in the information supplied.

The good news is that it has been confirmed that there will be no native forest sawlog industry worth noting in WA from 2024. Major companies like Parkside, that have been pushing for additional logging to occur, have now been given certainty that there is no need to hang around in WA. Our forests are not going to be supplying them with logs.

The figures supplied by the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) confirm that the only Jarrah sawlogs that Government intends to make available under the next Forest Management Plan would come from mine site clearing, largely in the Northern Jarrah Forests.

On current figures, DBCA projects that up to 15,000m<sup>3</sup> of Jarrah sawlogs will be produced from mine-site clearing, with no other sawlogs coming from the forests.

In 2022, both major Jarrah forest mining companies will face the EPA and a major community campaign, and WAFA will be working hard to prevent mining expansions into the forests.

The bad news from the information supplied is that the planning for the thinning program is getting off to entirely the wrong start.

The McGowan Government has a policy to develop a program of thinning degraded forests to improve their ecological health. The first thing that needs to be done is to consult and to achieve scientific and community consensus on what kind of program will in fact improve the forests' ecological health.

We need independent restoration ecologists to be leading the development of any program.

Instead, we have a bunch of timber volumes generated by the very people who have been planning for timber production from logging activities for decades, and not the tiniest hint of any how any thinning can be justified in terms of forest health, and not an independent scientist in sight.

This is precisely how WA makes the same mistakes we've made in the past. We have to stop putting timber volume calculations ahead of forest health and biodiversity considerations.

In terms of the regrowth thinning operations, Wafa has some major and specific objections.

In the Karri forests, DBCA is planning to thin 95-year-old stands of Karri forest. What possible ecological justification could there be for that? And while there will be no more clear-felling, or any thinning or logging in forests that haven't been clear-felled in the past, DBCA still anticipates being able to get 200,000m<sup>3</sup> of wood from these operations. Given that WA currently exports about 150,000m<sup>3</sup> of Karri woodchips every year, what is DBCA's plan for the Karri forests?

It sounds like the people doing the figures in DBCA are hoping that even with clear-felling stopping and the old Karri forests being off-limits, they will be able to continue more or less business as usual in the recovering forests. That is not what the Premier promised us and will be vehemently opposed. The forests have suffered too much, and the WA public has fought too long and hard, for this policy change to allow logging to slip through under a new name.

In the regrowth Jarrah forests, it appears from the figures that DBCA is planning targeted thinning of dense, heavily logged regrowth forests that they consider to be particularly impacted by climate change. At this stage, DBCA anticipates that 25,000m<sup>3</sup> of Jarrah and 25,000m<sup>3</sup> of Marri will be taken out of Jarrah forests that have been intensively logged in the past 30-50 years, with none of the timber being sawlog.

We have seen no justification for this program so far, no detail on where it would be carried out or on what basis. The Marri figure rings particular alarm bells – Marri trees are already in short supply in the forests after decades of being targeted by the timber industry as a 'weed-tree' and are critical to habitat and biodiversity.

The thinning program could either be a small-scale scientific exercise, led by world-class restoration ecologists in heavily degraded areas that helps to put some wrongs of the past to right, or it could just be logging under a new name. Both options are still possible.

Today, timber companies can see that there is going to be no notable native forest sawlog industry in WA beyond 2023. We hope that spurs them on to leave our precious forests immediately: they're not welcome in WA and they will not be getting timber allocations under the next 10-year Forest Management Plan.

There must now be an independent scientist-led community consultation program to develop the parameters of any thinning program with a clear and uncompromising commitment to only considering operating at a small-scale in heavily degraded regrowth and mine-site rehabilitation areas, taken guidance from Traditional Owners and ruling out burning any of the wood for bioenergy.

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