



MEDIA RELEASE

Forestry Education Upgrade

(19 December 2006)

Dr Peter Volker, National President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA), has welcomed the announcement by Federal Education Minister Julie Bishop for funding of a graduate masters program for forestry training (see below for details).

Dr Volker says that despite high demand for professional foresters from industry and governments, it has been difficult to attract high school graduates into undergraduate degree programs. Dr Volker believes that this has been because of a number of factors including the general decline in enrolment in science based degrees, difficulties in students relocating from their homes for tertiary study and lack of awareness of the opportunities for careers for forestry graduates.

Dr Volker says that the image of forestry being a profession that is only involved in logging could not be further from the truth. "Foresters are well trained to undertake a number of roles in management of our forests including harvesting, building and designing roads and bridges, regeneration, fire management and conservation. In fact, some of the most senior people in world conservation organisations such as IUCN and WWF are professional foresters trained at Australian universities." Foresters are also serving in senior roles combating the current bushfires across the country.

The CASR funded Masters Program will enable graduates, who may have become more aware of the opportunities specialised forestry training can give them, further training and knowledge specific to forestry. In addition it will enable the four universities to work together closely to offer a high quality package of courses. Dr Volker says the IFA will be encouraging industry and governments to support the program.

Further information

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COLLABORATION AND STRUCTURAL REFORM FUND (CASR)

Projects funded through the 2006 funding round

National Professional Forestry Coursework Masters Programme

Lead Organisation: The Australian National University
Partners: Southern Cross University; The University of Melbourne; and
The University of Tasmania.

CASR funding: \$1.58 million

This project will deliver a national Master's programme in forestry, jointly offered by the Australian National University, Southern Cross University, the University of Melbourne and the University of Tasmania. Curriculum for the new programme will be developed and delivered jointly and will facilitate mobility of students and staff. The collaborating universities are also the principal research training partners in the Co-operative Research Centre for Forestry, ensuring strong links to research on nationally-identified priorities.