

## **Letter to Canberra Times via Media Liaison Officer Peter Langdon.**

### **Forest facts (Canberra Times 15.09.08)**

As Ross Garnaut has noticed, forests have a key role in the removal and storage of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Perhaps for this reason Prue Acton (Letters, September 10) suggests native forests should not be used for wood production.

Sounds reasonable, but is this right? The Institute of Foresters of Australia's view, based on a thorough analysis of the facts, is that through sound management native forests are able to provide forest products and long-term carbon storage.

To understand if our native forests are soundly managed look no further than Australia's State of the Forests Report 2008.

It found that in 2005 native forests used for wood removed three times more carbon from the atmosphere than they emitted.

Native forests are good for wood and carbon. Despite this fact only 6 per cent of public native forest in Australia is used for wood.

The report also highlights our worldclass forest conservation network and the sustainable forest management regime applied to production forests outside this network.

The evidence of sustainable forest management in the report should encourage us to use Australian forest products with confidence.

And with the knowledge that we are helping to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

Peter Langdon, Institute of Foresters of Australia

### **Replies**

#### **If you want a greener house effect, leave native forests alone (Canberra Times 16.09.08)**

Contrary to the claim of the Institute of Foresters' Peter Langdon (Letters, September 15), woodchipping native forests is a large source of greenhouse gas compared with leaving the forest untouched for biodiversity, water yield, recreation and carbon storage.

An untouched forest is a large carbon store in the soil, on the forest floor and in large old trees.

Periodic clear-felling means that there is much less carbon per hectare, averaged over time. The missing carbon appears as CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere.

Converting unproductive farmland to a sustainable forest could increase the average amount of stored carbon per hectare. However, using native forests for pulp or for electricity production (by combustion of woodchips) makes no sense from a greenhouse perspective.

It is best to leave our remaining native forests alone.

Professor Andrew Blakers director, Centre for Sustainable Energy Systems, Australian National University

#### **Forests of carbon (Canberra Times 16.09.08)**

Australia's State of the Forests Report 2008 estimates that 11.9 million tonnes of carbon was sequestered by managed native forests in 2005 while 3.8 million tonnes was harvested as round wood.

What the report and Peter Langdon (Letters, September 15) fail to mention is that, depending on forest quality and harvesting strategy, the amount of slash remaining after the harvesting operation can vary from 0.25 to four times the amount of wood recovered (National Carbon Accounting System Technical Report No17).

This material is retained in the forest where it may be burnt prior to forest regeneration, subsequently in controlled burning operations, or in wildfire.

If it is not burnt it will decay more slowly.

Failure to account for emissions such as these in managed native forests leads to an unrealistic view of their benefits for carbon sequestration.

After all, the slash-to-recovery proportion needs only have a value of 2.13 for sequestration and emissions in managed native forests to be in balance, ie, carbon-neutral.

Peter Snowdon, Aranda

### **Recycled solutions (Canberra Times 19.09.08)**

In about 1914 the Australian Government commissioned a South African consultant to advise on the establishment of plantation forests.

He advised that they be established on unproductive agricultural land.

The State Forest Services followed this sage advice but the consequence was a large number of unproductive plantations which were abandoned in the 1930s.

They found that plantation trees grew best on deep, fertile soils with good, 1000mm rainfall.

There was no suitable land with moderate slopes so foresters sought steeper land unsuitable for agriculture.

They found the land they required was covered with high-quality native forest.

The people needed wood of a different kind so native forests were replaced with plantations.

That is no longer an option, so new plantations need to be established on agricultural land.

Ninety years on, Professor Andrew Blakers (Letters, September 16) has again offered sage advice that plantations should be planted on unproductive agricultural land.

Yes, we need to reduce our carbon emissions, we need innovative solutions, but we do not need to recycle tired old solutions that have been tried and found wanting.

Unproductive land is just that, unproductive.

Peter Snowdon, Aranda