

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

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The Editor
Augusta Margaret River Mail

Dear Sir

David Rastrick's numerous recent letters to your paper deserve some professional reaction. The Institute of Foresters of Australia strongly opposes deforestation and supports the secure reservation of our public native forests to protect them from clearing. To this end, we support the Australian Reserve System which has developed from the Comprehensive and Adequate and Representative (CAR) Reserve System initiated by the Regional Forest Agreement process.

The Department of Environment and Heritage State of the Forests 2003 Report indicated Western Australia forests occupy 25.4 million hectares or 10 percent of the WA landscape. There were 3.8 million hectares of forest in National Parks and formal conservation reserves and only 1.6 million hectares were multiple use public forests available for harvesting. Within the multiple use forests there were many informal reserves which cannot be harvested.

No Old Growth Forests are available for harvesting. Harvested public native forests are regenerated and managed to grow into future mature forests.

Forests require management and protection whether they are in a reserve or not. Exclusion of fire is a particular threat to the ecological processes in southern WA forests which is not widely appreciated.

The IFA also promote the use of timber from sustainably managed forests and plantations. We advocate certification of forest practices to ensure forest management is sustainable. Products from Australian forests are likely to be preferable to alternative materials such as steel and concrete which require (non-renewable) mining and high embedded energy and tropical timbers sourced from forests being converted to other land uses.

Most blue gum plantations are privately owned and most are targeting the buoyant pulpwood markets. Without substantial market intervention, it is unlikely that many growers will produce sawlogs as alternatives to softwood plantations or native hardwoods.

In conclusion, the main forest conservation issue is to halt conversion of forests to other land uses. The public forests of the south west are generally adequately reserved and in good condition which is a legacy left by dedicated professional forest managers. Long may this continue.

David Wettenhall,
Chair, Institute of Foresters of Australia, WA Division.
31st March 2008