



IFA WA Division
PO Box 187
COMO WA 6152

Chairman, D Wettenhall
PO Box 5093,
Albany, WA. 6332
Phone 08 9844 4999
Mobile 04 0794 4998
Facsimile 08 9844 4378

E-mail davidw@plantall.com.au

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Dr Colin Terry
Infrastructure Planning Branch
Water Corporation
PO Box 100
Leederville WA 6902

Dear Sir

Please find attached a submission from the Institute of Foresters of Australia regarding the Wungong catchment Environment and Water Management Project.

Yours sincerely,

David Wettenhall
Chairman, WA Division
Institute of Foresters of Australia



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Wungong Catchment Environment and Water Management Project

Submission to the Water Corporation

by the Institute of Foresters of Australia

July 2005

Wungong Catchment Project

Institute of Foresters of Australia

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) is the organisation representing Australian professional foresters. The organisation was formed in 1930, has active branches in all of the Australian States and the ACT, and is governed by an elected Board. A requirement of membership is that members have University level qualifications in forestry or a closely related scientific discipline, or extensive relevant practical experience in forest management or forest science.

The IFA is an advocate for better forest management in Australia, for high professional standards in forest and woodland management and for the active management of our forests for all values.

Current membership is approximately 1200. Members are employed throughout Australia, and overseas, and in a variety of occupations, including native forest, plantation and national park management, research, bushfire management, land care, education, public service administration, private forestry and industry. The age and experience profile of our members ranges from new graduates to retired men and women with over 50 years of experience in forestry, park and land management in Australia.

Wungong catchment project background

The project proposal outlines that the Wungong catchment covers 12,845 hectares of mainly forested land close to Perth. It has been an important water supply since 1925 but also has been a source of timber, recreation and conservation services and has been extensively mined for bauxite.

The proposal aims to establish a 12 year trial to increase water yield from the catchment as a long term low cost source of good quality water for Perth to meet rising demand and declining run-off due to climate change. Water yield is to be increased by thinning the forest over 62% of the catchment area and by reducing water use by vegetation through prescribed burning.

The Wungong trial provides an opportunity to incorporate silvicultural practices that lead to high quality wood production as well as water for the population of Perth. This balance is required and the community needs to be aware of the costs of not undertaking these trials. (Wungong catchment management project, p 44).

IFA response to the Wungong catchment management project

The Wungong catchment management project is an excellent proposal to sustainably enhance the forest values to the benefit of the community. The Wungong is typical of extensive areas of jarrah forest on the low salt-risk sectors of harnessed catchments and thus the trial will provide a demonstration of a technology which can be very widely used elsewhere, with major advantages.

The forests of the Wungong catchment are highly valued because of their proximity to Perth and the inherent nature of the forests. We recognise the additional pressure on these resources due to increasing population demand for water, declining rainfall and water yield due to climate change and general increases in demand for forest products, conservation and recreational activities. It is critical that these forest assets be managed to maximum community benefit.

The IFA recognises that the Wungong catchment has been extensively disturbed over the years by clearing for agriculture, bauxite mining, disease and timber harvesting. Despite this, the remnant jarrah forest retains high conservation value.

The IFA advocates that the catchments should be sustainably managed for water production as the first priority. The priorities for management should be:

1. Sustainable management of the forest for long term community benefit
2. Water harvesting for high quality drinking water supply
3. Public safety and protection of constructed assets and assets on neighbouring land from wildfires
4. Conservation of flora and fauna
5. Timber harvesting, tourism and other commercial and recreation activities and regional conservation targets

The IFA opposes further bauxite mining in this catchment.

The IFA believes these objectives can be serviced through existing forest science. The IFA believes there is sufficient forest science available to justify the silvicultural and fire management treatments proposed as trials in the project. The IFA considers the project very cautious and would advocate early adoption of the project over wider areas of catchment.

The IFA recognises the studies referred to in the Wungong catchment project proposal which identify that forest thinning can be used to increase catchment yield without significant risk of detriment to native flora and fauna and spread of the disease caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

The IFA considers the project to be a cautious approach to the management of the forests and advocates that all wood resource derived from the treatments should be made available to the relevant industry. for harvesting.

The IFA advocates the commercial utilization of timber products generated as part of the project. Under the Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 timber supplies from Western Australia's native forests have become quite scarce and this makes timber more expensive to WA consumers and increases timber imports. Every opportunity should be offered to the timber industry to conduct the Wungong catchment project operations within strict guidelines for the recovery of timber products and fire wood for domestic processing and consumption.

The project refers to exotic native species planted as part of mine rehabilitation operations for their dieback resistance values being converted to native species. The species are generally Australian Eucalypts not native to the area, for example, *E. robusta* and *C. maculata*. Although local species are preferred in native forest areas, some exotic natives are productive timber species with good resistance to dieback. The IFA does not advocate their removal unless they demonstrate aggressive weed properties.

Conclusion

The Institute of Foresters of Australia is strongly supportive of the Wungong catchment management project. It is a very cautious proposal and the IFA encourages early extension of the trials into wider management of jarrah forest catchments west of the salinity risk zone. Every opportunity should be taken to commercialise the operations to maximise the utilization of timber products grown in the forests.

David Wettenhall, B Sc (Forestry), MIFA, RPF, MACFA
Chairman, IFA WA Division