

Conservation of Australian Native Forests and Woodlands

IFA Forestry Policy Statement 1.2.1

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates that Australia's native forests and woodlands need to be covered by a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve network. Conservation is dependent on sustainable forest management that sustains ecological processes, environmental services, and economic and social outcomes.

The Issue

Virtually all of Australia's forests and woodlands have been modified by human activity, with the most significant impact occurring in the last 150 years due to clearing. Despite the end of broad scale clearing, the legacy of this unsustainable land management lives on. It is a significant national challenge to achieve conservation and sustainable management of remnant native forests and woodlands.

The majority of Australia's native forests and woodlands are located on privately owned lands with competing land-use interests. With many land owners having limited knowledge of sustainable forest management.

The ongoing threats to Australia's native forests and woodlands include inappropriate fire management, introduction or spread of feral animals and exotic insects, weeds and diseases, as well as the further fragmentation of forests due to mining, settlements and infrastructure development.

Background

Australia has 147 million hectares of native forests and woodlands that provide habitat for wildlife, shelter for livestock, protection of soils and water, carbon storage, cultural values, and renewable forest products. Since European settlement, at least one third of Australia's forests and woodlands has been lost due to conversion to farming and settlements. Effective conservation of these forests requires understanding, protection and balance of the sometimes competing values evident in these ecosystems.

Policy

The IFA supports and encourages:

- The use of the *Australian Guidelines for Establishing the National Reserve System* and the Regional Forest Agreement procedures to allocate forests and woodlands to a system of Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserves
- Appropriate legislation to control the clearing of native forests and woodlands on private land
- Environmental stewardship payments to private owners of forests and woodlands to encourage action beyond legislated responsibilities to achieve positive environmental outcomes for the public
- Forest regeneration and active management of fire, pests and diseases.

The IFA considers that:

- The greatest threats to the conservation of Australia's native forests and woodlands comes from competing land-use activities, unsustainable forestry practices and climate change
- Forest management for native forests and woodlands should be founded on the ecologically sustainable principles for multiple benefits in the public interest
- If possible the conversion of native forest and woodlands to other land uses should be avoided
- Public native forests and woodlands should be managed by people trained in the principles of sustainable forest management and supported with professional knowledge and expertise
- All forests and woodlands should be protected from large high-intensity wildfires, through a fire management system that incorporates fuel reduction and rapid access for fire suppression
- Under some circumstances legislation should provide for silvicultural treatment of forests and woodlands and allow the salvage of forest products from damaged areas within forest reserves.