

## **Conservation of Remnant Native Woodlands**

### **IFA Forestry Policy Statement 1.6**

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the need for long-term substantial efforts to improve the conservation and management of remnant native woodlands in agricultural areas. Land managers of public and private land should be encouraged to adopt a strategic approach to the conservation of remnant native woodlands. Public authorities should use equitable, incentive-based schemes based on sound scientific and economic principles to enhance the conservation of these areas.

#### **The Issue**

Since European settlement Australia has lost significant areas of native woodlands. Many of these remaining woodlands are degraded and under threat from further clearing, rising saline water tables, livestock, nutrient enrichment, soil structural decline, altered fire regimes and exotic weeds.

In agricultural landscapes remnant native woodlands provide important ecosystem services and assist agricultural productivity. Some woodland ecosystems are the most poorly conserved ecosystems in Australia, so a sustained and urgent effort is needed to improve the conservation and management of these areas.

#### **Background**

This policy addresses areas of remnant native woodlands that are relatively small intact areas within a predominantly cleared landscape. Recently, Australian legislative controls have aimed to prevent further clearing of native vegetation. However, as mentioned above, these woodlands are still under threat.

A strategic approach is required to assess conservation values of remnant native woodlands and to provide encouragement and incentives to conserve the more valuable remnants. Factors to be considered in this assessment include:

- The degree to which the woodland ecosystem and its values have been lost in the landscape
- Its long-term viability and the cost of conservation with appropriate management
- Its size and the potential to connect with other areas of viable native woodlands
- The need to maintain genetic pools to ensure that native species and communities continue to evolve with climate change.

#### **Policy**

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Land managers participating in public policy development and landscape or catchment level planning to improve the conservation and management of remnant native woodlands
- The use and development of scientific research in the assessment of conservation values
- Public funding of scientific research into the conservation of remnant native woodlands, impacts of disturbances, and ways to conserve and enhance them
- Incentive-based approaches, including stewardship payments, to enhance conservation, management and restoration of viable remnant native woodlands
- Regulatory authorities to recognise the differences in conservation status of areas of remnant native woodlands and consider trade-offs to achieve optimal biodiversity outcomes
- Community-based organisations, such as Landcare and Greening Australia, working with landowners to improve the conservation and management of woodlands.

The IFA considers that:

- There is need for substantial and sustained efforts, involving incentive-based and regulatory means, to improve the conservation and management of remnant native woodlands in agricultural areas.