

FIAC Secretariat, Forestry Branch  
Department of Agriculture  
GPO Box 858  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email [fiacsecretariat@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:fiacsecretariat@agriculture.gov.au)

**Friday 5 June 2015**

Dear FIAC secretariat,

**Submission to 'Meeting future market demand: Australia's forest products and forest industry — a strategic directions issues paper'.**

This submission responds to broad issues in the Strategic Directions Issues Paper (March 2015).

### **Introduction**

Australia's forests are unique and valuable. We are extremely lucky to have them.

The intrinsic values of our forests are undeniable – they provide us with clean air, clean water and carbon sequestration, to name a few.

The Strategic Directions Issues Paper doesn't acknowledge the conflict between logging and those other values, which is irresponsible.

It also doesn't acknowledge the conflict between logging and other commercial uses of publicly owned forests, such as local tourism industries, recreation activities and honey production.

A strategic directions process that fails to acknowledge and work with those realities is also failing the sector as a whole – leaving it vulnerable and unprotected against necessary action on threatened species, carbon sequestration and emissions, water production, tourism promotion and the political instability of native forest logging incentives.

### **General comments and suggestions**

In order to best respond to the future demands of the Forests, the Forest Industry Advisory Council should separate the logging industry sectors in this process – publicly owned native forest, privately owned native forest, hardwood and softwood plantations, which are otherwise conflated in the discussion paper.

As a multi-sector industry, the lack of differentiation between both the more profitable and sustainable sectors together with less profitable ones makes it difficult to develop an accurate picture about what the future might look like for our forests and plantations.

Native forest production is now only 17% of our total wood supply (p.8) but undeniably causes nearly all the conflict with other industries and with other values.

It's time to accept the reality that logging publicly owned native forest is no longer viable in the medium term, so any industry reliant on it will fail. The global business community is against it, and wood products produced from it are only viable with large government subsidies. Australian governments have to answer to an Australian public that overwhelmingly wants our publicly owned assets protected, our biodiversity preserved and other commercial uses of forests encouraged.

I caution against any push to gain access to native forests on private land via “[G]overnment regulation on vegetation management on private land” (p.21), such as logging under the guise of wildfire management. Landowners won’t stand for it.

Instead of focusing on finding new industries like electricity and heat generation to deal with the problem of whole logs that are not suitable for sawn timber or veneer products, or from which there is a large amount of waste (p.18), the strategy should recognise that native forest areas that are not viable for logging have a greater value standing.

The commercial problems of selling destructive native forest products to a market that demands certification is well known (p.26). Any new ‘bio-fuels’ industry from burning native forests will face the same or greater problems.

A ‘bio-fuels’ industry based on native forest logging will have to deal with the high financial and emissions costs of transport and lack of certainty in the resource in relation to future action for Co2 emissions, the restrictions imposed by any new RET, particularly the prospects of removal of native forest wood products from the RET by future governments, as well as forest protection and fire.

## **Questions for consideration**

### **Vision and objectives**

1. What should the vision be for the forest products sector in the coming decades?
  - a) Forests and biodiversity have an intrinsic value, as well as the value for biodiversity protection, climate management, water production and filtration.
  - b) Logging should not be in conflict with those intrinsic values, or with other commercial uses of forest such as tourism and honey production.
2. What specific objectives should underpin this vision?

Environmental objectives should include:

- a) No loss of water quality or quantity from forested catchments. Three million Victorians rely on clean drinking water from forested catchments.
- b) Measurable increase in habitat protection for species threatened by logging, including measurable increase in protection of hollow-bearing trees.
- c) Measurable improvement in status of threatened species that are impacted by logging.
- d) Soil carbon accounting showing no loss in carbon storage in the soil due to logging.
- e) Forest biomass accounting showing no loss in sequestered carbon in forests due to logging.

Objectives for avoiding loss of employment in regional communities due to competition with logging:

- a) Use of income from protection of forests for carbon sequestration and as carbon stores for land management, pest animal management and forest based employment initiatives.
- b) Increase the investment in forest-based tourism in regional Australian communities and measurable increase in forest-based tourism employment in local communities.

- c) Examination of the impact of logging on regional tourism, including the impact of logging trucks on local roads, forest areas and roads closed for logging.
- d) Measurable reduction in impact of post-logging burns at peak times for regional tourism.
- e) Measurable reduction in smoke-taint of local produce from post-logging burns.

**Sustainability of logging industry**

- a) The logging industry should not rely on politically favourable conditions in relation to availability of forest on publicly owned land and political incentives in order to be profitable. Doing so will leave it vulnerable to political change.
- b) The logging industry should have a robust plan to deal with the reality of bush fire.
- c) Wood production should complete the transition to a plantation based industry for a robust sustainable future.

Yours sincerely,

personal contact details  
personal contact details  
personal contact details  
personal contact details

Janet Rice

*Senator for Victoria  
Australian Greens spokesperson for forests and tourism.*