

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC  
Chair, Environment and Public Affairs Committee

Dear Mr Swinbourn

**RE: Petition No. 053 – Protect High Conservation Value Forests**

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of this petition, which to my knowledge, has not been taken to the Ombudsman. It calls on the Legislative Council to “Enquire into the most effective and timely means to protect High Conservation Value forests and transition the timber industry out of native forests in line with the Government’s pre-election commitments”.

I bring to the Committee’s attention the following commendable pre-election promises made by the WA ALP Environment Spokesperson and Peter Watson MLA:

- “Immediately conserve High Conservation Value forests to provide protection for some of WA's most threatened wildlife including the forest Black Cockatoos, Western Ringtail Possums, Numbats and Quokkas;
- Move to complete the transition of the native forestry industry into sustainably managed plantations and farm forestry with a focus on high value, locally processed, job-rich enterprises;
- Plan for the forestry jobs of the future;
- Restart the process of establishing approved conservation reserves identified in the Forest Management Plan 2004 – 2013; and
- Review the governance around timber industry planning and management.”<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the importance of promises, there is an urgent need to protect WA’s High Conservation Value (HCV) forests. In 2002, the Conservation Commission, now called the Conservation and Parks Commission, documented 116 HCV forests in the Perth, South-West and Warren regions.<sup>2</sup> These 116 forests were identified as HCV due to containing rare and threatened ecosystems and vegetation complexes and/or threatened animal and plant species, European and Indigenous heritage and riparian zones, wildlife corridors or other values. Many contain pockets of old growth forest that sit outside the current conservation reserve system – yet all 116 are available to be logged. A total of 20 are listed by the Forest Products Committee for logging in 2018, and another 10 are listed on Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions’ harvest plans for 2018-2020<sup>3</sup>.

Logging our HCV forests is neither economically nor environmentally sensible because:

- Our jarrah forests are not growing back at the rate that they are being harvested and ever smaller and lesser quality logs are being produced;
- Karri-marri forest ecosystems are not recovering from clear-felling conducted primarily for woodchips destined for export;
- The current management plan does not adequately cater for the impacts of climate change;
- The WA native forest timber industry is increasingly unprofitable and ever more reliant on State Government interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from email by Hon. Chris Tallentire MLA to J. Beckerling, WA Forest Alliance 16/2/2017. See also WAFA video.

<sup>2</sup> Conservation efforts are hampered by the Government’s existing definition of old growth forests. Organisations such as the WA Forest Alliance and the Wilderness Society argue that the Government’s classification of old growth forests is inadequate and exclusionary, and therefore does not satisfactorily protect Western Australian forests  
<https://www.conservation.wa.gov.au/media/842/final%20hcv%20report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>FPCs 2018 Harvest Plan at <http://www.fpc.wa.gov.au/harvest-plans> & DBCA’s Harvest Plan 2018-2020  
<https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/forests/forest-produce/175-planning-for-timber-harvesting>

- Threatened fauna species are not recovering from the habitat loss associated with logging in State forests<sup>4 5</sup>; and
- Locally grown hard and soft woods are better able to meet current market needs and expand them<sup>6</sup>.

Meanwhile, research has found that communities traditionally viewed as economically dependent on the native forest-based timber industry are more likely to identify their futures as being in agriculture (including honey, truffles and oils), tourism and other industries, rather than logging<sup>7</sup>. HCV forests also support a variety of sustainable local nature tourism activities such as bushwalking, wildflower and bird spotting and forest-based cultural heritage and food tourism. There is potential for carbon farming initiatives to support the local economy. Yet these preferred industries are jeopardised by native forest logging. Furthermore, logging trucks on public roads are perceived as dangerous and inconvenient<sup>8</sup>.

HCV Forests provide other essential social and environmental benefits, including habitat for endangered and other species; protection of biodiversity; enhancement of community health, peace and wellbeing; amelioration of climate variability; water production; and carbon sequestration.

Harvest of these forests could destroy these values for generations and possibly forever. The need to transition to plantations, farm forestry and associated local processing is urgent. We must preserve, and preferably improve, the condition and resilience of our forests and therefore support the communities that depend on them.

Clearly, the risks associated with harvesting HCV forests far outweigh the benefits, in economic or any other terms. The Forest Products Act 2000, which compels the FPC to try to make a profit from native forests, is outdated. Furthermore, no State or Federal legislation exists that requires the FPC to protect threatened species and their habitats. Rather using public resources to try to extend the life of the increasingly unprofitable and unpopular industry, the Government's focus should be solely on supporting plantations and farm forestry and associated local processing.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Diane Evers MLC

**Member for South West Region**

**16 April 2018**

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<sup>4</sup> Nesting hollows form in trees that are a minimum of 130 years old. Red-tailed and Baudin's Forest Black Cockatoos require nesting hollows in trees that are on average 230 years old and the scarcity and ongoing loss of these nesting hollows is the major threat of extinction to these endemic birds  
<https://www.wilderness.org.au/sites/default/files/PDFS/TWS%20FSC%20and%20karri%20logging%20report%20September%202015%20compressed.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> 'In 2013, 35 esteemed scientists called for urgent measures to be put in place to protect the biodiversity of the south-west forests. They found that continued industrial-scale logging in the region is "continuing to reduce critical habitat for threatened species such as nesting hollows in mature trees" and their first recommendation was that "critical habitat for threatened species including forest that retains the structure of the original forests should be urgently protected from degradation and loss" '  
<https://www.wilderness.org.au/sites/default/files/PDFS/TWS%20FSC%20and%20karri%20logging%20report%20September%202015%20compressed.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> 'Plantations – The Missing Piece of the Puzzle' (Forest Industry Federation of WA, 2016)

<http://forestindustries.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/FIFWA-WA-Plantations-Missing-Piece-of-the-Puzzle-2016.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> E.g. 'Socio-Economic Review- Final Report' (Shire of Nannup, 2015) & 'Socio-economic impacts of the forest industry Western Australia'(Schirmer et al., 2017) [http://www.fwpa.com.au/images/WA\\_Report\\_Dec2017\\_Final.pdf](http://www.fwpa.com.au/images/WA_Report_Dec2017_Final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Schirmer et al., p66.