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## Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry; Small Business

Our ref: 82-00018  
Your ref: A997767 Petition No. 067

Hon Peter Foster MLC  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
4 Harvest Terrace  
WEST PERTH WA 6005  
[env@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:env@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Chair

### **PETITION NO. 067 – SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT**

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2022 to the (then) Minister for Forestry, the Hon Dave Kelly MLA, in relation to Petition No. 067 – making preliminary enquiries into the petition from the principal petitioner and the tabling Member of Parliament.

I am pleased to provide the attached information and additional context that address the forestry related concerns of the principal petitioner and the tabling Member of Parliament.

Thank you for writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jackie Jarvis'.

Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC  
**MINISTER FOR FORESTRY**

*Att*

22 DEC 2022

## **Evidence supporting the decision to end commercial native forestry activities**

The principal petitioner requests an examination of the science, monitoring and assessment of the impacts of climate change on the availability of native forest timber and policy options for government to achieve its objectives without closing the timber industry.

This examination has been undertaken over the last 18 months through the research and drafting of the next *Forest Management Plan 2024-2033* (FMP 2024-2033), prepared by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) for the Conservation and Parks Commission. The two-month period for public comment on the draft FMP 2024-2033 closed on the 18 December 2022.

The transition to harvesting younger regrowth forests, an industry bias for larger sawlogs than assumed in the current FMP 2014-2023; and silvicultural prescriptions to maximise sawlog production rather than forest health outcomes, has led to an industry that is both environmentally and economically unsustainable. There has also been a significant reduction in the tonnes per hectare available for jarrah sawlog since the beginning of the current FMP 2014-23.

The Forest Products Commission (FPC) has provided the principal petitioner with relevant references highlighting the impacts of climate change on forest health. This includes the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report which states that human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe.

Scientific references which specifically focus on the Western Australia's (WA) southwest forests have also been provided. These research papers show that precipitation is the most important factor in adaptation to climate change. Since the mid-1970's, rainfall in the southwest has decreased by as much as 20 per cent. This has caused native forest growth rates to decline, and in some areas, significant areas of forest have died (collapsed) from extreme drought. Climate modelling also suggests that with continued predicted rainfall decline, the area able to support jarrah growth in the south-west will continue to decline

## **Policy options to achieve forest management objectives without closing the timber industry**

Given that the impacts of climate change are already impacting our forests, it is vitally important that WA transitions to a new paradigm for forestry as soon as possible. The draft FMP 2024-2033 does not propose an end to management of native forests but provides the framework for future forestry activities that maintain and improve forest health and resilience through forest thinning rather than the current commercial driven forest management that has produced sub-optimal outcomes for forest health and climate change resilience of forests. The proposed future management activities focused on forest health outcomes will reduce the threat to forest biodiversity from forest collapse and protect our unique WA forests for generations to come.

Native timber sourced from these forest management activities for forest health, as well as timber harvested from approved mine site clearings, will continue to be available post 2023 for uses such as engineered timber products, high value furniture, joinery, charcoal, firewood, and artisanal and other miscellaneous consumables. As usual the usual practice, the process for the sale and purchase of these products will be released following the finalisation and publication of the next FMP 2024-2033, towards the middle of 2023.

**Managing the impact of the decision – the costs and benefits from the change in policy**

The costs of this significant change in policy to industry are being assessed through the Native Forest Just Transition Plan managed by the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTISI) with input from the Native Forest Transition Group (NFTG). The NFTG representatives are comprised of local industry, Chamber of Commerce, Shires, union and Government stakeholders. A total of \$80 million has been allocated to assist workers, businesses and communities to transition to a new way of operating in our native forests or transition out of native forestry altogether. This includes funding for retraining, developing new industries, supporting communities as well as redundancy packages.

**Forest product requirements of WA and alternative resources**

The State Government has also announced a \$350 million investment in the softwood plantation sector. This funding has been allocated over the next 10 years to support and grow our softwood plantation estate and supply timber for the construction industry in WA well into the future. This is considered the single biggest investment in plantation expansion ever in Australia.

While the future of forestry in WA will look different in terms of scale, forest type and available products, the decision to manage our native forests for forest health outcomes and invest in the expansion of our plantation forests will ensure a future for many forestry related businesses in WA. The decision to end logging of Western Australia's native forests reflects the changing attitudes of the community towards our native forests.