

Management of Private Native Forests

IFA Forestry Policy Statement 2.2

The Institute of Foresters of Australia considers that private native forests provide important benefits to the community and advocates improved institutional support to encourage sustainable forest management.

The Issue

Many of Australia's private native forests are not well managed. There is a common lack of government policy and institutional support for the management of private forests and the marketing of wood from private forests is generally poorly coordinated. Landowners and the community often don't realise the potential environmental and economic contribution of private forests. This leads to the conversion of private forests to other land uses including agriculture and urban development.

Background

Private native forests (including woodlands) are those in freehold ownership and those in public ownership, but privately managed through leasehold arrangements. These forests are owned by a large number of landowners, with varying sizes of ownership. They are used for a wide range of purposes including sawn timber, firewood and speciality timbers, as well as grazing, water production and biodiversity conservation.

There are several key aspects of sustainable forest management of private native forests, including:

- Policy, legislative and institutional guidelines to encourage conservation and sustainable management, including right to harvest arrangements and Codes of Forest Practices
- Valuation of environmental services or incentives to encourage retention and sustainable management through stewardship arrangements
- Accurate inventories of forests including the extent, distribution, types, uses and values
- Competent forest management advice from qualified professionals to private landholders
- Promotion of markets, market information and encouragement of investment and infrastructure
- Property management plans that include the forested land component and the requirements for sustainable management
- Promotion of private native forest management as a sustainable and profitable management system
- Management and economic measures that protect high conservation value forest.

Policy

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Sustainable management of private native forests to provide renewable timber resources and to maintain environmental and conservation values
- Development of an appropriate policy, legislative and institutional framework that promotes profitable and sustainable management of private native forests for production, environmental and conservation values
- Recognition of the stewardship role of private forest owners and the need for appropriate incentives and environmental service payments to encourage sustainable forest management
- Application of appropriate management plans and Codes of Practice for timber harvesting to protect the many values of private forests
- Regular inventories of privately managed forests to monitor their composition, extent and condition.