

## **Timber Production in Native Forests**

### **IFA Forestry Policy Statement 2.7**

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates that significant areas of public and private native forests are managed for timber production while maintaining ecological sustainability and other forest values.

#### **The Issue**

Timber production from Australian public native forests has declined over the past decade largely due to changing community expectations and the policies of the Commonwealth and State governments. There is a general impression in the community that harvesting timber from native forests is not a preferred use. This is encouraged by the ongoing transfers of public native forests to conservation reserves and strict regulations on timber harvesting within native forests that are available for production.

#### **Background**

There have been large changes to timber production in native forests through the Regional Forest Agreements emerging in 1992 along with growing community opposition to timber harvesting in public native forests. There have been large transfers of timber production forest to conservation reserves, as well as significant reductions in allowable harvest levels and changes to harvesting regulations.

There is extensive scientific evidence that Australian native forests can be harvested for timber production while maintaining ecological sustainability. Forestry professionals with current knowledge and skills are capable of managing the harvesting of native forests while maintaining ecological processes.

Australia has large areas of native forests, which can produce high quality hardwood timbers to meet domestic demand. Many of these products cannot yet be produced in plantations. Failure to produce these timbers in Australia will lead to increased imports, often from developing countries whose forests are not managed to the same high standard.

Harvesting of native forests for timber production can provide road access for activities such as recreation, ecotourism and the production of non-timber products like honey. Harvesting can also reduce damaging impacts of insects, fungi, fire and extreme weather events. Thinning of dense regrowth forests provides a source of timber while also promoting healthy forests and minimising the risk of wildfire and insect attack.

#### **Policy**

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Standards for native forest management based on scientific principles and research evidence, to achieve ecological sustainability
- Management of native forests to produce high value timber products not easily produced in plantations
- Thinning programmes in regrowth forests, as well as the use of timber products unsuitable for high value uses during harvesting
- Accommodating changes to ecology knowledge when calculating sustainable timber yields for native forests.

The IFA considers that:

- Producing timber from native forests provides many benefits to Australian society
- Forestry professionals have the skills to develop management strategies that meet forest owners' objectives and community expectations regarding the production of wood products and the maintenance of other forest values in native forests.