

## **Silviculture in Australia's Native Forests**

### **IFA Forestry Policy Statement 2.9**

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates that silviculture plays a key role in the sustainable forest management of native forests. Silviculture should be attuned to natural ecosystems and assist forest management objectives meet the needs of landowners and society. Silvicultural practice in native forests can improve the supply of forest goods and services while maintaining ecological processes.

#### **The Issue**

There is no silvicultural treatment that is appropriate in all situations due to diversity in species, stand structure, regeneration requirements and management objectives in native forests. An appropriate silvicultural decision needs clear management objectives, as well as knowledge of the ecology and circumstances of each stand. If these are considered, silviculture can enhance forest health and productivity, water yield and biodiversity, as well as reducing the impact of severe wildfires and other risks to forest health.

#### **Background**

Silviculture is the sustainable art and science of controlling the establishment, growth and quality, health, protection and use of forests to meet the diverse needs and values of forest owners and society. This involves a range of treatments to maintain and enhance the use of the forest for any management purpose. One of the challenges of silvicultural practice in public native forests is ensuring that land managers and society agree on management objectives and priorities for various uses and values. Other challenges include gaining sufficient funding and support to maintain the skills needed for silvicultural practice.

#### **Policy**

The IFA supports and encourages:

- The sustainable development and use of silvicultural systems with an ecosystem-based approach to best fulfil the needs and values of landowners and society
- A variety of silvicultural practices in native forests that are economically, socially and environmentally appropriate for the forest type
- Silviculture in native forests to maintain and improve forest health, regenerative capacity and productivity
- Silvicultural standards, relevant to forest type, that include objectives linked to quantitative standards and scientifically based monitoring systems
- Research into improved silvicultural techniques to match natural processes and competing demands for timber, water, biodiversity and other forest values
- Using prescribed burning, appropriated chemicals, and selective or non-commercial harvesting as silvicultural tools.

The IFA considers that:

- Land managers need to develop priorities and realistic objectives to manage native forests before implementing appropriate silviculture
- Silvicultural practices contribute to ecologically sustainable forest management, maintaining forest community patterns and processes, as well as the health and productivity of the forest
- Silvicultural treatments are required in some multiple use forests and conservation reserves to improve forest health and mitigate damage caused by previous poor management
- Decisions on silvicultural practices should ensure effective regeneration of the range of species within a forest, maintain forest health and consider occupational health and safety requirements
- Thinning or culling of trees in multiple use forests can maintain their productive capacity and in some cases enhance tree growth important for biodiversity conservation.