



## Media release

### Forestry experts oppose expansion of Wellington National Park

Foresters are very concerned by a proposal from the Yabberup Community Association to nearly double the size of the Wellington National Park by including adjacent areas of state forest and the Wellington Discovery Forest.

Institute of Foresters WA Division spokesman John Clarke said: 'Changing tenure from state forest to national park does not automatically produce better land management – in fact the reverse is often true. Greater wildfire risk, weed and pest infestation as well as loss of biodiversity have all been observed in land tenure changes interstate. Keeping the current management regime – including multi-use of the Wellington Discovery Forest is the best option.

'Increase tourism and visitation cannot be achieved by changing large areas of state forest to national park. State forest has the option for multiple uses, by definition, and recreational activities are perfectly compatible with this type of forest land. There are many important recreation areas close to Collie and Donnybrook on state forest including the Glen Mervyn Dam Picnic Site, the Yabberup and Lyalls Mill camp sites, and the Stockton Dam water ski and camping area.

'One of the aims of the Wellington Discovery Forest is to showcase sustainable forest management to the community. Many local school groups visit the WDF to learn about sustainable forest management. Changing the tenure of the forest will preclude many of the activities that occur, and will reduce the capacity to expand visitor facilities.

'Expansion of the Wellington National Park will significantly reduce the area available for sustainable timber harvesting. Timber harvesting and processing has a long history in the South West and many businesses rely on it to employ local people. Any expansion of the Wellington National Park is likely to result in job losses, rather than job creation.

'Under current arrangements, the Forest Products Commission (FPC) funds prescribed burning on state forest areas subjected to timber harvesting and undertaken by the Department of Parks and Wildlife in the South West. By reducing state forest areas this funding will also reduce which is likely to result in less prescribed burning. A reduction in prescribed burning will increase the size and intensity of bushfires affecting residents.'

'Another impact of the proposed tenure change is the ability of residents to collect firewood. Public firewood collection is prohibited in national parks, and the areas of state forest proposed by the Yabberup Community Association for tenure change contains several public firewood collection areas. This change will especially affect residents of Collie, where wood fuelled heating is very common. The reduced availability of firewood may also impact local businesses,' said Mr Clarke.

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**The IFA is Australia's professional body for foresters and other forestry professionals**