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IFA comments on EPA Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 mid-term audit of performance report

The Institute of Foresters of Australia, representing professional foresters, expressed disappointment and concern at the recent EPA report on the mid-term audit of the Forest Management Plan 2004-2013.

Chairman of the W.A. Division of the IFA has insisted on increased thinning in the northern jarrah forest to relieve water stress across the landscape as the best manageable response to reduced rainfall.

“Thinning has been shown to improve the health and growth of the remaining trees, improve regeneration, improve understorey health and help to restore stream-flows. The EPA’s presumption that reduced logging will be good for the catchments and forests is not supported by science” he said.

The EPA elicits confusion about the most significant, manageable threats to the forests which are:

- (1) clearing for mining (1,000 ha/year);
- (2) conversion of forests for urban and semi urban development;
- (3) increasing fire frequency and intensity over large areas of the forest in the absence of sufficient prescribed burning; and
- (4) spread of disease over large areas.

Harvesting as practised in WA, is not a threat to the forests at a landscape level.

The EPA report reflects a lack of understanding and expertise of WA forest management. Forest management requires a complex balance to meet the objectives of sustainable forest management. These requirements go well beyond the conservation of biodiversity and forest health and include operating within the legal framework while protecting social and cultural values, soil and water values and carbon cycles.

In addition, the audit was necessarily confined to the forest covered by the Forest Management Plan and does not consider the contribution of the extensive formal conservation reserve network to achieving the biodiversity outcomes. There is no logging in Old Growth Forests in WA. Taken in context of the full landscape and the normal ecological assessments undertaken as part of harvest planning, biodiversity considerations are well catered for.

It would be common sense for the WA government to include **Registered Professional Foresters (RPF®)** on all forest management authorities. The RPF accreditation scheme is a formal registration system that provides quality assurance in forestry expertise.

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