

# The Logging Industry's Plan for the Future of Australian Forests until at least 2050

or

## IFA 'tenure neutral' President to co-chair new forestry advisory group'<sup>1</sup>

The Forest and Wood Products Council (FIAC) is the logging industry lobby group now entrenched within the Australian Federal Government. It is legislated that one of the industry delegates co-chairs the council with the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources (or his/her delegate). FIAC recommends to the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources (or his/her delegate) proposed legislation or policies pertaining to Australia's forests.

FIAC was established as the result of a 2013 election promise to the National Party and the logging industry, represented in Australia by the Forests Wood Products Association and the Australian Forests Products Association. When established in 2014 it was announced by National Party Senator Richard Colbeck, at that time Assistant to Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce. Now Liberal Senator Anne Ruston is co-chair along with Rob De Fedegly described as the 'tenure neutral' President of the Institute of Foresters.

Senator Colbeck also is an avid supporter of and advocate for removing management of Australian forests from the jurisdiction of national parks agencies and/or departments of environment and transferring all forested areas to management by the logging industry. **This is termed 'nil tenure' or 'tenure neutral' by**



**the National Party and the logging industry, i.e. ignoring protective legislation and treating all forests the same.** By management Senator Colbeck refers to introducing logging into national parks and other areas where logging is currently prohibited under the guise of correcting forests from being 'overstocked' with trees (logging industry terminology). This is referred to as 'thinning'. Likewise FIAC recommended and obtained from the federal government \$1.5 million dollars to experiment with 'thinning and burning' native forests under the guise of bushfire mitigation. The science against this is ignored.

The Terms of Reference and vested interests of the members of the Forest Industry Advisory Council illustrate the degree to which policy and legislation regarding Australian forests is dictated by the logging industry. No independent scientific or economic advisors sit on this council. Members are affiliated with logging and/or logging industry products and forestry agencies. The Institute of Foresters' (IFA) media release regarding the establishment of FIAC and the appointment of one of its own as co-chair in this manner: **IFA 'tenure neutral' President to co-chair new forestry advisory group'**

FIAC is delivered through the Forest and Wood Products Council under subsection 11 of the Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002, (RFAs).

It is not surprising FIAC recommends to the government renewal of a new phase of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) to legitimise ongoing industrial logging of native forests, across Australia. When FIAC refers to 'rolling renewals' of RFAs it refers to there being no definite end date in the new RFA phase, i.e. that after the next 20 years the agreements can continue simply by a Minister stating that a relevant 5 year review has been done and so having the RFA 'roll over' every 5 years, in semi-perpetuity.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forestry.org.au/kcfinder/upload/files/IFA%20media%20release%2005%20Mar%202014%20ode%20Fegely.pdf>

This is what FIAC has been established to effect, ongoing and increased access to the last remnants of Australian's native forests and woodlands by the international and domestic logging industry.

FIAC recommendations are couched in sophisticated industry rhetoric which most people might not know how to interpret. The terms sustainable, innovation, best practice and ecosystem services are sprinkled throughout the FIAC recommendations disguising what is really a plan for

- increasing access for logging
- ensuring certification of that logging as 'sustainable' in order to make exporting Australian native forests more profitable because by being certified as deriving from 'sustainably' managed forests it can thereby be more profitable as an export for the international wood biomass trade. This highly damaging and industry which deems burning wood biomass carbon neutral is seeking to obtain social licence by insisting the feedstock for furnaces to have derived from sustainably managed forests.

Below are a few recommendations from the logging its industry blueprint for the future of (all) Australian forests until 2050, entitled Transforming Australia's Wood Products Industry. Under a sympathetic federal government FIAC's recommendations are being steadily realised, but not without resistance from scientists, economists and the national conservation movement. AFCA has interpreted these recommendations based on past experience of what the terminology means and of the concessions the logging industry has secured to date.

Recommendation 1: That the Australian Government immediately implements its commitment to rolling 20-year Regional Forest Agreements

Recommendation 2: That the Australian Government commits to a \$300 million 10-year programme of mechanical fuel reduction as a bushfire mitigation measure for forest and community protection

Recommendation 6: That the Australian Government provides support for the economic development of the forests on land owned or managed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people **The Timber NSW's submission to the FIAC enquiry proposed education and guidance to Aboriginal land councils on silvicultural management of their timber assets. State forest agencies have been targeting indigenous communities attempting to gain legitimacy for its MFLR programme and other burning activities by attempting to marry the concept of indigenous fire-stick burning with post logging and bush fire mitigation. This has resulted in indigenous trainees being co-opted to introduce burning practices in landscapes where these have not occurred under indigenous landscape practices. (e.g.Tasmania)**

Recommendation 9: That the industry's levy contribution for industry research and development is maximised by:

- **the Australian Government removing the cap on its matching of voluntary contributions to Forest and Wood Products Australia – this recommendation speaks for itself – more subsidies but without limit**

Recommendation 10: That the Australian Government works with all levels of government to remove regulatory and other barriers to using forest biomass and promotes its use as a renewable energy source **Already achieved at federal and some state levels, e.g. the inclusion of native forest wood biomass as renewable energy form in the 2015 Renewable Energy Target (RET). The NSW Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Amendment (Native Forest Bio-material) Regulation 2013 effectively permits any RFA product to be burnt for energy, regardless of industry rhetoric that native forest wood **residue only** is/should be utilised.**

Recommendation 11: That the Australian Government immediately produces methods that enable the inclusion of commercial forest and harvested wood products in the Emissions Reduction Fund auction process. **Timber NSW's**

submission to FIAAC *Submission on Meeting future market demand: Australia's forest products and forest industry – a strategic directions issues paper* suggests ERF subsidy to the timber industry for: storing carbon in wood products, not indulging in short logging rotations, using wood for 'bio-energy', activities that increase in-forest carbon storage. The latter logically could be 'no longer logging'. In summary the timber industry attempts subsidy for almost anything it does, or doesn't do.

Recommendation 12: That the Australian Government immediately amends the Renewable Energy Target scheme to ensure that thermal energy from wood biomass is eligible for Renewable Energy Certificates. **So far this industry demand that has apparently been resisted but a bi-lateral statement endorsing the document in which this recommendation features could suggest reconsideration.**

Recommendation 15: That Australian forests and forest products are certified to international standards by:

- industry ensuring that all Australian production forests and forest products obtain certification under an internationally recognised certification scheme
- the Australian Government ensuring that all forests obtain internationally recognised certification of their forest management **This section refers to 'all', not just production 'forests' which could legitimise export of any wood product from any forested land in Australia to countries requiring supply chain sustainability assurances. Internationally recognized certification can be as vague as PEFC or AFS (industry invented standards lacking comprehensive sustainability criteria and the requirement for independent audit)<sup>i</sup> . As the Australian government accepts the timber industry claim that forestry is sustainable in Australia there is no oversight of claims made under these standards. Hence Australia could market product from logging national park forests as a sustainably sourced fuel supply to destinations substituting wood for coal or even nuclear power generation, all under the name of 'renewable' wood biomass energy.**

Recommendation 17: That industry uses strategic alliances to broaden community support for the forest industry.<sup>ii</sup> This continues well established marketing campaigns that Australian native forest logging is sustainable undertaken with industry partners such as Planet Ark, Grand Designs Australia and state forest agencies involved in the Forest Wood Products Australia's Forest Learning Programme (and website). This programme has developed classroom resources mapped to national curriculum codes which have been insinuated into the national on-line school resource portal for the teaching of sustainability in schools. Funded by the federal government this resource is promoting non peer reviewed 'forest' science in schools. Module content includes the sustainability of Australian native forest logging and the carbon neutrality of wood biomass burning and the claim that Australian native forest logging will help mitigate climate change impact. The Australian Forests and Climate Alliance has written to all educational unions private and public, and to national and state geography and science associations in relation to this industry initiative.

Recommendation 18: That the Australian Government develops procurement policies that support the Australian forest industry and its broader contribution to the Australian economy. **The relationship between this recommendation and the government's NEG is being researched.**

Sophisticated government backed industry campaigns persuade the public *all is okay with native forest logging* (to address an acknowledged loss of 'social licence' to continue native forest logging) are now operating in Australian schools and endorsed by the federal Secretariat for on-line resources in sustainability education. It's almost impossible for citizens, scientists, economists and/or legal practitioners to inform the Australian public that Australian native forest logging is bringing the nation's forests to a swift ecological end.<sup>iii</sup> For further unravelling of logging industry rhetoric see [AFCA's letter to federal and state education departments, all educational unions both public and private and state and national and all geography and science teachers' associations.](#)

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<sup>i</sup> This includes the Australian Forestry Certification Scheme (AFCS), developed by industry with industry invented criteria and lacking independent audit processes. AFCS is a forest certification scheme developed to promote sustainable forestry management specifically for the Australian environment. AFCS has mutual recognition by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Scheme (PEFC) – the world’s largest forest management certifier.

<sup>ii</sup> From the FIAC doc: Strategic alliances could also change perception and generate awareness of the forest industry. For example, the ‘Wood. Naturally Better.’ consumer programme—a joint initiative of FWPA and Planet Ark—was supported by television commercials that aired from 2011 to 2014. Tracking research showed the commercials increased consumer understanding of the advantages of wood. They were also thought to have indirectly improved ‘the social licence for the industry to operate’ (FWPA 2014).

<sup>iii</sup> A detailed list of international and national forest industry propaganda is available.