

The path we are now on: Interpreting Forest Industry Advisory Council recommendations, i.e. more logging, burning and removal of protections for any forested land in Australia

Some of the recommendations of FIAC's blueprint for the management of Australian forests to 2050, "Transforming Australia's Wood Products Industry" are below, with comment.

Recommendation 1: That the Australian Government immediately implements its commitment to rolling 20-year Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs). **Critique of RFAs is to be found elsewhere. The important terminology to note is that 'rolling' agreements is effectively agreements without end, that can almost automatically self renew at the end of a nominal 20 year time frame.**

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

Please see False Bushfire Solutions for further information on this insidious attempt to use public fear of bushfire as an excuse to log (thin) forests and possibly sell the thinnings for the wood biomass trade. This includes national parks and other protected areas. Industry witnesses indicate the trials are a foregone conclusion.

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 Mechanical Fuel Load Reduction programme – (logging forests with or without a burn to follow) - and other burning activities. Using non peer reviewed studies and self appointed experts, the logging industry is 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. It means more money to the logging industry, no government 'cap' when matching contributions by industry**

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).**

In NSW the Liberal O'Farrell government in 2013 obligingly amended the [Protection of the Environment Operations \(General\) Amendment \(Native Forest Bio-material\) Regulation 2013](#) to permit 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 FIAC 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 is attempting to be subsidized 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 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)ⁱ. 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.ⁱⁱ **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 now.**

ⁱ 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.

ⁱⁱ 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).