

## NEWS

# Forestry proposals welcomed

## Industry support for parliamentary committee report.

**F**orestry industry representatives are hopeful governments will take action to shore up the sector's future viability in the wake of a wide-ranging parliamentary inquiry.

The House of Representatives Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry Committee has made 19 recommendations for reform of the forestry industry following an extensive inquiry.

Among them was the need for a national plan for plantations, as well as consideration of national approaches to forestry and climate change, farm forestry and other issues. It has been 20 years since Australian governments issued the National Forrester Policy Statement.

Committee chair Dick Adams (Lyons, Tas) said the committee did not want to dwell on the environmental conflict that has been a prominent part of the industry's history.

"The recommendations have been carefully couched to give hope to our forest workers, our contractors, sawmillers, pulp and papermakers and our craft and woodworkers," he said.

"Australia wants a sustainable industry in all its facets and we want to ensure that our landscape still reflects the power of the trees."

The report has received the support of industry groups such as the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), particularly the inquiry's recommendation that the generation of electricity by burning of native forest waste products be recognised under the Renewable Energy Target (RET) scheme.

Regulations in the government's carbon tax package have prevented the eligibility of native forest biomass for renewable energy certificates.

However, independent MP Rob Oakeshott (Lyne, NSW) has moved a disallowance motion to overturn the regulation.

AFPA chief executive David Pollard said Mr Oakeshott should be congratulated for his "rational and necessary" action.

However environmentalists who have long campaigned on this issue are outraged by Mr Oakeshott's motion.

Environmentalist and well-known fashion designer Prue Acton said the timber industry needs to be called to account over its environmental claims.

"The timber industry often promotes timber products as environmentally friendly," she said.

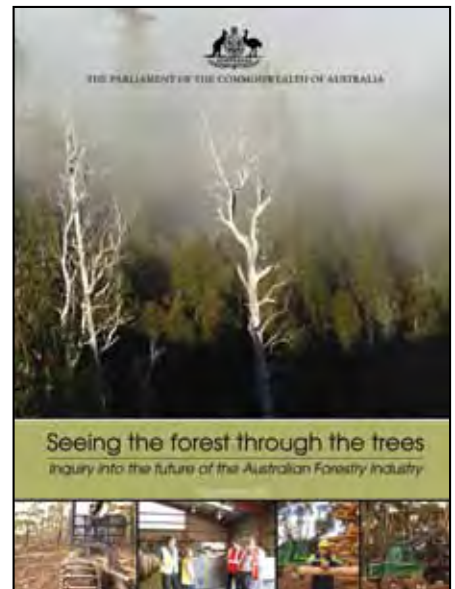
"Certainly timber products may be less environmentally damaging than some plastics, but this does not mean that timber and wood products are environmentally friendly."

In other recommendations the committee has called for changes to the regional forest agreements to give more certainty, a system for quantifying carbon stored in wood products and a national public information campaign to promote the use of wood products as replacements for more energy intensive materials.

Overall the 10-month inquiry found the future of Australian forestry is bright, but acknowledged it was grappling with several challenges such as the impact of the global financial crisis and other market shifts.

"To help the future of the planet, we will need to have wood replace other materials which embody much more energy than non-renewables such as steel or plastic," Dick Adams said.

Mr Pollard said the government now had a number of reports on the forestry industry to consider.



**GROWING FUTURE:** Forestry report calls for reform

"We are heading down the path in association with the [Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry] of putting them together in some sort of comprehensive report that can provide the basis of a strategy of the industry," he said.

"This report of the committee would be an input to what the final strategic view of the industry's future is."

Mr Pollard said there was also "positive movement" on the formation of a taskforce with industry and government representatives to ensure the committee's report is acted upon.

"AFPA welcomes a number of key recommendations from this inquiry which acknowledge the important role the industry can play in a renewable and sustainable economy." •

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