

The logo features the word "Forestlinks" in a large, white, sans-serif font, centered over a collage of forest-related images including tree trunks, green leaves, and a woven basket. The collage is set against a dark background with vertical stripes in orange, green, and blue.

Forestlinks

An eNewsletter from Forestry Branch

- **Australian forest report card available now**
- **Climate Change and Forestry Action Plan**
- **Preparing Australia's forestry industry for the future**
- **Illegal logging**
- **Asia-Pacific Forestry Week**
- **Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program**

A horizontal strip of a forest scene with various tree trunks and foliage.

Australian forest report card available now

Australia's State of the Forests Report 2008 was released on 21 May by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke at Auswest timber processing centre in Bairnsdale, East Gippsland.

This is the third report in the series and fulfils a commitment made through the 1992 National Forest Policy Statement to provide the Australian public with a forest sustainability report every five years. It also meets international reporting requirements under the Montreal Process and applies the criteria and indicator framework of sustainable forest management developed for Australia.

The report draws upon a wide range of data from public and private sectors, and provides the most comprehensive review yet of the state of our forests.

Key findings include:

- Australia's plantation estate grew by 12 per cent in the last five years and now produces two-thirds of the nation's log supply;
- forestry and forest products industries are now worth \$19 billion annually (a real increase of 10 per cent) and support more than 120 000 direct jobs;
- since 2003, the area of Australia's native forest in formal conservation reserves grew by almost 1.5 million hectares to 23 million hectares, with additional areas set aside through informal reserves; and
- Australia's forests and plantations offset around 9 per cent of our greenhouse emissions.

The report was prepared by the Montreal Process Implementation Group for Australia (MIG) on behalf of the Australian, state and territory governments. It is a result of a major collaborative effort by the jurisdictions and a wide variety of specialist input coordinated by the BRS.

The product range includes a full report, stand alone executive summary and a series of eight fact sheets. Copies are available from the new ForestsAustralia website

[Top](#)

Climate Change and Forestry Action Plan

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has received a draft Climate Change and Forestry Action Plan that has been developed under contract by the Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council (A3P). A3P consulted with Australian, state and territory government agencies as well as industry stakeholders and representatives of research organisations.

The Climate Change and Forestry Action Plan, and plans for fisheries, agriculture and biodiversity, are Council of Australian Governments (COAG) initiatives. They aim to help sectors plan for climate change using mitigation and adaptation strategies based on the latest research and development and effective communications.

The Climate Change and Forestry Action Plan covers tree planting for all commercial purposes as well as native forests managed for wood production, and processing facilities such as sawmills, board plants, and pulp and paper mills. The draft action plan puts forward strategies and actions to address threats and opportunities associated with climate change.

The action plan steering committee convened by A3P has participated in development of the plan and provided comment on previous drafts. Stakeholder workshops highlighted the need for further research and development on region specific climate data and on management options that would mitigate impacts and realise opportunities associated with climate change.

Forestry branch of DAFF is now preparing the action plan for endorsement by ministerial councils. There will be further consultation prior to the action plan's presentation to the Natural Resource Management and Primary Industries Ministerial Councils for endorsement in April 2009.

Further information: Ian Ruscoe 02 6272 4225 or ian.ruscoe@daff.gov.au

[Top](#)

Preparing Australia's forestry industry for the future

The Australian Government is securing the future of the forest industry through five policy commitments and \$20 million in funding.

The government has made the following commitments to forest policy in Australia:

- \$1 million to establish ForestWorks as the new Forest and Forest Products Industry Skills Council. This initiative will build the skill base and capacity of the forest industries workforce, provide forest industries with direct input to National Skills Reporting which informs government and the Vocational Education and Training sector of future skills needs, and will enhance monitoring of the effectiveness of forest and forest product industry training packages
- \$1 million to address the forest community's need for a comprehensive industry-wide database. Data contained in Forest and Wood Products Industry Workforce and Industry Data Collection research project will be updated and expanded to meet the future needs of both government and industry, and to develop world best practice benchmarks for the

forest and forest products sectors

- \$1 million to work with regional governments and industry to build capacity to prevent illegal timber harvesting; to develop and support certification schemes for timber and wood products sold in Australia; to set point of sale requirements for disclosure of species, country of origin and any certification; to identify illegally logged timber and restrict its import into Australia, and to argue that market-based incentives aimed at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation should be included in a future international climate change agreement
- \$8 million to address major knowledge gaps identified through the Climate Change and Forestry Action Plan in the national climate change adaptation framework. The commitment will address key impacts, vulnerabilities and research priorities. Adaptation and mitigation tools and strategies will be developed in collaboration with state and territory governments and industry and these will be integrated into other national climate change strategies
- \$9 million to establish a Forest Industries Development Fund to boost the export of forest products, help reduce Australia's trade deficit and encourage ongoing investment in value adding initiatives.

The Australian Government is developing implementation plans for all its forestry commitments.

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[Top](#)

Illegal logging

The Australian Government has committed \$1 million to work with industry and regional governments to combat illegal logging. The government has undertaken to restrict the importation of, and trade in, illegally logged timber and wood products in Australia and to encourage the sourcing of these products from sustainable forest practices.

Five election commitments were made to address illegal logging and the department is working to identify and develop policy options to meet these commitments consistent with Australia's trade and foreign policy obligations. Significant consultation and preliminary work already has been undertaken with other government departments and agencies to progress this work. Further consultation with state and territory governments, industry and non-government stakeholders will occur in the near future.

Some key developments in international cooperation to combat illegal logging include:

- agreement between Australia and Papua New Guinea to cooperate on forest certification and legal verification issues to address illegal logging
- agreement between Australia and China to develop a memorandum of understanding to combat illegal logging and trade in illegal forest products
- discussions between New Zealand and Australia on common policy measures aimed at eliminating illegal logging in the region
- adoption of a resolution on illegal logging at the 17th Session of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna.

[Top](#)

Asia-Pacific Forestry Week

Asia-Pacific Forestry Week (21–26 April) was almost certainly the largest single event this year that dealt exclusively with forests in the Asia-Pacific. Organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the event was anchored to the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) which brings together forestry leaders from 33 member countries to assess forestry issues and chart future directions for forest policy.

In addition to the hosting of APFC, Forestry Week was designed with the broader forestry community in mind. More than 700 participants from 50 countries attended the event to discuss a range of topics including climate change, forest governance, invasive species and forest education and research. Australia played a lead role as the Rapporteur for the APFC and by holding a dialogue on the United Nations Forum on Forests processes in an effort to strengthen linkages between global forest processes and regional initiatives.

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[Top](#)

Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program

The Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program will provide up to \$15.8 million over four years to assist countries in the Asia Pacific region increase their forest management expertise and improve the carbon sequestration performance of their forests.

The program will improve capacity for sustainable forest management in the Asia Pacific region. This in turn will improve forest management practices, maximise carbon retention rates and improve carbon capture in regenerating forests.

This program is part of the International Forest Carbon Initiative, which is a key component of Australia's international leadership on reducing emissions from deforestation.

The first round of the program closed in December 2007 with an excellent response from around the world. 79 expressions of interest were submitted to be competitively assessed by a panel of relevant government departments including the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Department of Climate Change and the Australian Agency for International Development. A total of 18 projects with a combined value of \$2.3 million is being funded under the first phase of the program.

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[Top](#)

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