

Appendix 1

ISSUES RAISED DURING PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A summary of the issues raised by members of the Stakeholder Reference Group and the general community during the wide range of public consultations for the RFA outlined in section 1.2.6.

Forest resources

- Native forest resources ought to be utilised.
- Concern that changes in reserve systems will compound current difficulties in resource availability and management and will be at the expense of industry.
- Security of tenure and/or resource is required by the timber, mining and other forest-based industries such as tourism, bee keeping, wildflower collecting and seed collecting, for a range of reasons including exploration, investment planning and industry viability.
- Concern about social and economic impacts that resource uncertainty causes.
- Need to balance old-growth conservation with timber demands.
- Opposition to the use of jarrah for the manufacture of silicon and charcoal.
- Opposition to clearfelling and woodchipping.
- Governments should recognise Noongar intellectual property rights in respect of Noongar traditional knowledge of forest flora, fauna and other resources.
- Noongar people require unrestricted access to all areas of the forest, including national parks and nature reserves, for spiritual, cultural and recreational purposes, including hunting.
- Protection of Noongar heritage places from destruction or damage caused by clearing, logging, development, mining and any other activity in the South-West Forest Region including compensation for damage.
- The use of Australia's publicly owned native forests should be based on comprehensive and co-ordinated land use planning.
- Opposition to logging or mining in national parks, and to their privatisation.
- Criticism that some areas have been given national park status (for example, Shannon National Park) when better areas exist, and that conferring national park status creates a negative public attitude towards mining.
- Community concern over mining leases in native forests.
- Security of access to economically mineable mineral resources is a fundamental determinant of mining companies' willingness to invest in mining operations, particularly in existing leases and tenements.
- Access to land for mining exploration is essential to maintain and expand the mining sector's significant contribution to the state's economy.

Forest management

- Concern regarding the process for identification, management and care of forest values outside of the RFA study area.
- Concern about long term sustainability of current forest management regimes and the long-term sustainability of the native forest timber industry.
- Concern that forests are managed for timber production rather than for ecological sustainability.
- Concerns relating to a range of issues including forest hygiene, dieback, pests, weeds, forest residues, salinity, prescribed burning practices, regeneration practices, water quality, the loss of carbon to the atmosphere, forest recreation, the size of clear-felling coupes, retention of larger numbers of habitat trees and timber wastage rates.
- Concerns relating to water-related forest management issues raised, including the protection of divertible water resources, the need for the protection of catchment areas for dams and water quality in general.
- Need to keep the understorey in natural condition for the benefits of other industry groups. Clearfelling and prescribed burning regimes severely impact upon apiarists.
- Need to improve knowledge about sustained timber yield.
- Native forest outside conservation reserves should be managed for multiple use.
- Noongar people consider that their traditional knowledge of the natural environment has much to contribute to appropriate forest management and that it is their right to do so under either Native Title legislation or the principles of natural justice.
- Noongar joint-management arrangements with CALM should be developed for the South-West Forest Region.
- CALM has an excellent forest management policy and should not be hindered in implementing its timber strategies

Industry adjustment

- Concern about the social impacts of timber industry rationalisation and increased automation.
- Need for enhanced value-adding processing to create more jobs. Assistance should be provided to enable local communities to develop broader value-adding opportunities.
- Need for industry improvement in areas such as timber recovery rates.
- Recent and upcoming industry adjustment is due not only to changes in resource availability, but also to broader social, economic and technological change.
- The RFA needs to provide certainty to industry.

Consultation and transparency

- Public want greater opportunity to participate in the forest decision-making process and community effort and input should be recognised and utilised.
- Consultation is an important component of the care of cultural heritage places.
- CALM's management plans do not reflect changing community needs and CALM seems unaware of the impact of its decisions on local communities.
- Political decisions are made without industry or community consultation.

- A formal process needs to be negotiated and established for Noongar people to be involved in land management and planning decisions in the RFA region, both now and in the future, and where necessary governments to undertake any legislative reform required to implement this.
- Forest management processes and the RFA process need to be transparent.

Old-growth

- The definition of old-growth forest needs to be clearly understood in the public arena.
- Old-growth forest should not be harvested but instead be preserved for a range of social and environmental reasons.
- Some tourism operators are opposed to future logging of old-growth forests based on their assessment that old-growth forest attracts international, interstate and intrastate visitors.
- Need for adequate management of the relationship between tourism and old-growth forest.

Cultural heritage

- Concern was expressed regarding the level of protection afforded to cultural heritage places by the Australian Heritage Commission. It is unclear who is responsible for the care of places of cultural heritage significance.
- A greater level of community input should be incorporated into cultural heritage identification and management processes.
- Concern that identification of cultural heritage places would result in the locking up of land.
- Noongar people wish to be involved fully in the identification, assessment and development of protective mechanisms and guidelines for Noongar cultural and spiritual places, values and interests in the RFA region.
- Noongar people wish to have Aboriginal heritage issues addressed prior to the commencement of forest disturbance activities.
- Access to places of Aboriginal heritage value in forests is a matter of cultural survival to Noongar people.

Economic

- The Commonwealth Government's tariff policies restrict the international competitiveness of the timber industry.
- Concern regarding royalty structures.
- Non-competitive pricing structure between native timbers and imported timber discourages greater expansion of plantation timber production.
- Government and industry need to provide funding and employment and training opportunities for Noongar people to be involved actively and employed in culturally appropriate land management and interpretation.
- Mechanisms for the sharing of economic gains from forest-based industries with the Noongar communities should be developed.
- Need for better recognition of the economic value of tourism.

Education

- The Western Australian Government should support, facilitate and resource the Noongar community to inform and educate the wider community about Noongar values, places of Aboriginal heritage value and interests in the South-West Forest Region.
- Initiation of programs of cross-cultural training for all CALM personnel in order to increase their awareness of issues of Noongar identity and culture.
- There is a need for a greater knowledge of forest management practices within the wider community.

Plantations

- Not all timber requirements can be sourced from plantations and it is not necessary to rely on plantations if the native forests of Western Australia are managed by sustainable forest management.
- Need to review success of job creation as a result of increased bluegum plantations.
- Concern at loss of employment and decreased social structure in rural communities as a result of large timber plantations.
- Concern regarding the aesthetic impact of plantations.
- Mixed views about hardwood farm forestry plantations due to perceived social impacts.
- Plantations should play a role in the Western Australian RFA process at a very broad level when economies of scale in future industries are being considered.

Reserve design

- Potential dam sites should not be included in reserves.
- Representative areas encompassing the natural variation in each major native forest type should be reserved in secure tenure to be managed as closely as possible to the way in which they would develop naturally.
- Wilderness is an anthropocentric concept and should not be used to justify the creation of new reserves or other protected areas.
- Road reserve trees, although only a thin veneer, are not only a tourism attraction but are also important culturally and socially to the region. As such, road reserves should be excluded from the RFA reserve requirement and should not be logged at all.
- Blanket exclusion zones are highly unsatisfactory to the mining industry.
- Any changes to the existing reserve system should be made with the least possible impact on access to other forest resources, particularly mineral resources.
- A balance needs to be struck between forest conservation and mineral development.

RFA process and outcomes

- There has not been enough publicity or media coverage to make the general public aware of the RFA process.
- Timeframe for the RFA process is inadequate and the process as a whole is flawed. This is particularly of note in relation to the short time allowed for CRA projects.

- Concern about composition of the Steering Committee as a government only body and the delineation of the study area.
- Social and economic assessments need to be given equal weighting to scientific evaluation and modelling.
- Governments should ensure that implementation of the Western Australian RFA will not adversely affect Native Title rights and interests.
- The tourism industry is an important user of the forest and must be an equal partner with the timber industry in the development of forest policy and the RFA.
- The need for local government, local community and Noongar participation in developing and reviewing the RFA.
- The necessary trigger for an industry growth strategy will need to be the enactment of complementary federal and state legislation to underpin the value of the RFA.
- Incorporation in the RFA of a plan for the management of Noongar heritage places.
- New reserves created as part of the RFA process should operate as “multiple use” reserves which do not seek to constrain or prohibit mineral exploration and mining under appropriate environmental conditions.
- The arbitrary selection of 15% as a reservation target for the RFAs gives rise to concern that a future review of the RFA might determine, for reasons of expediency rather than scientific justification, that a higher reservation target should be set, thus imposing further constraints on access to mineral resources.
- Minimal additional planning and approval requirements should be imposed for mining operations outside the agreed CAR reserve system as existing requirements are already very complex.
- The RFA or subsequent legislation should provide security from further reservation initiatives during the term of the RFA, bearing in mind that the 20 year duration of the RFA is inadequate for major resource development projects.
- The biodiversity criteria of 15% should be used as a maximum figure rather than a minimum figure.