

# Forests

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## AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN FORESTS ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

*Australia has 164 million hectares of forest, which is 21% of Australia's land area and almost 5% of the world's forests. These forests contain an amazing array of diversity of plant and animal species as well as ecosystems. Over 16,500 higher plant species and 3,800 animal species are found in our forests and these numbers are continuing to grow as our knowledge of these areas improves. Our forests also play an important role in storing carbon and in regulating water flows, and have significant cultural heritage values to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.*

### Our Action Plan

- **Cease broad-scale land-clearing** in all states.
- **Immediate protection** for all rainforest, old-growth and other forests of high conservation value, as well as areas that are important for domestic water supply.
- **Phase out** the export of wood chips, and **encourage value-adding practices** at every possible opportunity to ensure Australia's logged resources are sold and exported for the highest possible return.
- Funding of a national water audit to **assess the impact of plantations** on water quality and quantity
- **Encourage investment** in timber and paper production in Australia through tax measures.
- **Remove subsidies** associated with logging of native forests.
- **Provide restructuring assistance** to forestry workers and communities affected by the phase out of logging of native forests.
- **Introduce further incentives** to protect native forests on private lands.
- **Ensure** all forestry operations are subject to Federal and State environmental, planning, heritage, native vegetation, biodiversity and water laws.
- **Ensure** all codes of practice for forestry operations have legislative force and ensure all members of the public have legal standing to enforce these codes.
- **Encourage the integration of plantation forestry planning** with National, State, regional and local natural resource management planning processes.
- **Ensure** all forestry operators provide accurate and timely information on their activities and ensure they are subject to freedom of information processes.

*“All forestry operations should be subject to Federal and State environmental, planning, heritage, native vegetation, biodiversity and water laws.”*

**Senator Andrew Bartlett**  
Environment  
Spokesperson



Other ACTION PLANS are available online at  
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## The Issues

In addition to their environmental values, forests are also important to our economy. The forestry and wood production industries employ around 78,000 people and generate products worth approximately \$6.6 billion a year. Current forestry practices favour monocultures of pine or bluegum, which does not encourage robust biodiversity within forestry. The Democrats are also concerned that water use within Australia's current plantation forest industry has not been appropriately assessed as a major user in regional catchment management.

Poor management practices of native forests in general are threatening the natural and cultural heritage values of Australia's forests. Each year, over 250,000 hectares of forest are lost due to land clearing. Altered fire regimes and introduced plant and animal species are also diminishing the values of these areas. There are now over 770 higher forest plant species that are listed as being nationally threatened, along with over 88 animals.

Around 13% of Australia's forests are in conservation reserves. However, the Democrats believe existing reserves are not comprehensive or representative of the values associated with our forests. We are also concerned that Federal Government funding of the National Reserve System is not at a level that would allow good management of these important areas.

Many areas of enormous significance are still being logged or are available for logging. The Australian Democrats do not support the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process as it has failed to result in the creation of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of forest reserves. It has also failed to produce sufficient changes in off-reserve management to conserve the natural and cultural heritage values of our forests and ensure a sustainable forestry industry.



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