

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Western Australia is blessed with some of the world's most spectacular native forests containing majestic tall trees, pristine river systems, rare ecosystems and unique indigenous flora and fauna.

Western Australia's old-growth forests are an irreplaceable community asset that must be managed responsibly to ensure that they flourish in perpetuity for future generations to enjoy.

The community has lost confidence in the Court Government's management of our native forests and, in particular, our old-growth forests.

Labor is committed to the full protection of all our remaining old-growth and high conservation value forests and will take a holistic approach to forest policy: incorporating forest protection and management; new jobs for timber workers; timber industry assistance; the plantation industry; ecotourism; and the restructuring of the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM).

Labor will:

- immediately end logging in nearly 99 per cent of Western Australia's old-growth forests by placing in reserves approximately 340,500 hectares of the 346,000 hectares of remaining old-growth forests;
- place an immediate moratorium on the remaining one per cent and review CALM's forward logging plans and timber contracts to determine whether the current contracts can be honoured in line with the sustainable yield set by the Regional Forest Agreement without logging this remaining unreserved area of old-growth forests.
- create 30 new national parks, including the 12 new national parks promised under the RFA, and 2 new conservation parks;
- create approximately 200,000 hectares of new reserves, in addition to the 150,000 protected under the RFA;
- reinstate the 17 proposed reserves (54,000 hectares) revoked by the Government during the RFA;
- reserve "icon" old-growth forests including the Walpole Wilderness Area, Greater Kingston, Greater Beedelup, Jane, Easter, Hilliger and Gardner;
- create 130 new, secure jobs in CALM and the Forest Products Commission;
- assist displaced timber workers to make the transition to an estimated 1,080 new, direct jobs that will be created in 2001 in plantation management and the Albany chip mill;



- institute an assistance package with an initial budget of \$57 million to assist the timber industry, its workers, their families and communities. This will involve an additional \$18 million of funding;
- allocate \$1 million, out of the \$57 million assistance package, to the timber furniture industry to assist with interstate and international marketing;
- ensure that Westrail ceases the utilisation of native timber for new railway sleepers and shifts to a total reliance on alternative materials, such as concrete, steel and plantation timber;
- institute a comprehensive review of CALM's policies and programs relating to dieback control and management, with a view to protecting remaining old-growth and high conservation value forests from infection;
- initiate a domestic marketing push to ensure that other building materials, including plantation timber and steel, replace jarrah and karri in structural uses; and
- work to enact legislation similar to the NSW *Carbon Rights Legislation Amendment Act 1998* to recognise in law the rights associated with carbon sequestered from the atmosphere by trees and forests and enshrine carbon rights on land titles.

## INTRODUCTION

Western Australia is blessed with some of the world's most spectacular native forests containing majestic tall trees, pristine river systems, rare ecosystems and unique indigenous flora and fauna.

Western Australia's old-growth forests are an irreplaceable community asset that must be managed responsibly to ensure that they flourish in perpetuity for future generations to enjoy.

However, the community has lost confidence in the Court Government's management of our native forests and, in particular, our old-growth forests.

Premier Richard Court and his Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes presided over the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) for Western Australia which ignored community concerns, failed to protect our old-growth forests and ultimately led to both unemployment and conflict in our forests.

The Government's attempt to split the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) also is a failure. Forest conservation is subordinated to timber production, there still is little transparency in the Department's operations and even its name has remained.

Labor is committed to the full protection of all our remaining old-growth and high conservation value forests and will take a holistic approach to forest policy: incorporating forest protection and management; new jobs for timber workers; timber industry assistance; the plantation industry; ecotourism; and the restructuring of CALM.

## OLD GROWTH FOREST

Past logging practices have impacted heavily on Western Australia's old-growth forests to the point where only 346,000 hectares, or less than 10 percent of our original old-growth forests, remains.

While some changes were made to its RFA, the reality is that more than 80,000 hectares old old-growth jarrah, marri and wandoo forests - which is nearly one-quarter of Western Australia's remaining old-growth forests - remains available for logging.

Old-growth forests are an irreplaceable part of Western Australia's unique natural heritage and support ecosystems not found in previously logged forest.

Labor believes the time has come to end logging what little remains of this unique community asset.

To implement this policy, Labor will:

- **immediately end logging in nearly 99 per cent of Western Australia's old-growth forests by placing in reserves approximately 340,500 hectares of the 346,000 hectares of remaining old-growth forests;**
- **place an immediate moratorium on the remaining one per cent and review CALM's forward logging plans and timber contracts to determine whether the current contracts can be honoured in line with the sustainable yield set by the Regional Forest Agreement without logging this remaining unreserved area of old-growth forests. A maximum of 5,500 hectares will be set aside to ensure that existing timber contracts can be honoured in the event that alternative sources of timber are unable to yield the required volumes. At the very latest, all logging in this area of old growth forest will cease by 2003; and**
- **complete a rigorous assessment of other high conservation value areas to be included in the reserve system within one year of election.**

## **30 NEW NATIONAL PARKS AND 2 NEW CONSERVATION PARKS**

Labor is committed to the cessation of logging in all old-growth forests and protecting these areas in a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system.

Labor will:

- **create approximately 200,000 hectares of new reserves, including 95,000 hectares of old-growth forests;**
- **create 30 new national parks, including the 12 national parks set aside under the RFA, and two new conservation parks; and**
- **protect 150,000 hectares of forest set aside under the RFA.**

The message of Labor's policy is simple: new reserves, better protection, new jobs.

Labor will establish the following new reserves (the names of these are only temporary and they will be re-named after public consultation):

- a 335,000 hectare Walpole Wilderness Area comprising four new national parks, three existing national parks and several thousand hectares of forest in Wattle, Mattaband and Burnside blocks;
- Greater Beedelup National Park (20,000 hectares) 15 kilometres west of Pemberton; incorporating the existing Beedelup National Park, Strickland Nature Reserve and Beavis, Carey and Giblett forest blocks and parts of Court and Gray blocks;



- Greater Kingston National Park (19,000 hectares); incorporating Kingston, Walcott, Mersea, Dudijup, Warrup, Corbal, Dwalgan and Winnejup forest blocks;
- Butler National Park; incorporating the old-growth forest in Butler, Layman and Darradup blocks between Nannup and Margaret River;
- Hilliger National Park; incorporating the old-growth forest in Hilliger, Blackpoint and Blythe blocks between Northcliffe and Augusta;
- Jane National Park (7,420 hectares); protecting one of the South West's most pristine old-growth forests, Jane block, near Northcliffe;
- Greater Hawke National Park; incorporating Hawke and Charley blocks, and parts of Flybrook, Crowea and Dombakup;
- Boorara-Gardner National Park; incorporating all of Gardner block and parts of Boorara, Babbington and Northcliffe blocks;
- Easter National Park; protecting the old-growth forest in Easter and Iffley blocks near Nannup;
- Greater Dordagup National Park; incorporating parts of Poole, Nairn and Dordagup forest blocks;
- Lake Muir National Park; by adding the old-growth forest in Spring, Poorginup and Chitelup blocks to Lake Muir Nature Reserve;
- Boyndaminup National Park; by protecting the old-growth forest in Boyndaminup, Mindanup and Challar blocks near Lake Muir;
- Greater Preston National Park; comprising Noggerup Conservation Park, Roseneath Conservation Park, the Australian Heritage Commission nominated portion of Hovea forest block and the revoked Preston and Goonac Conservation Parks;
- Tone Perup National Park (54,000 hectares); incorporating the existing Tone Perup Nature Reserve and Keninup and Talling blocks and the old-growth forest in Stote block;
- Whicher Range National Park (6,500 hectares) near Busselton;
- Hester Conservation Park near Bridgetown, by adding Hester 4, 7 and 8 to the reserve system; and
- Kerr Conservation Park near Balingup.

## Labor will also:

- **protect all remaining old-growth forest around Denmark in Styx, Hay, Sheepwash and Redmond blocks and add this area to Labor's proposed Mt Lindesay National Park;**
- **add the old-growth forest in Weld and Mossop blocks to Shannon and Mt Frankland National Parks;**
- **add the old-growth forest in Blackwood block to the proposed Blackwood River National Park;**
- **reinstate 54,000 hectares of reserves revoked by the Government: Gyngoorda, Gibbs, Wandoo, Duncan, George, Pascoe, Dardanup, Preston, Goonac, Charley, Camballan, St John Brook, Whicher, Rapids, Mowen, Keninup and Talling;**
- **place an immediate moratorium on logging to undertake an assessment of the scientific, economic and community values and the impact of logging on salinity, of:**
  - **the proposed 25,000-hectare expansion of the Wellington National Park near Collie;**
  - **Palmer and Leach blocks near Collie; and**
  - **Helms block near Nannup.**
- **investigate upgrading Lane-Poole Reserve to a National Park;**
- **establish the 12 new national parks promised under the RFA; and**
- **create 130 jobs in national park management and the upgrading of visitor facilities.**

## **FOREST BENEFACTOR PROGRAM**

Labor will offer individuals, businesses or groups the opportunity to sponsor the native forest through a benefactors' program which will enable people to contribute financially to the conservation and protection of our forest.

## Labor will:

- **introduce legislation to create an independent Western Australian Forest Benefactor Foundation to raise funds for forest conservation and protection. All donations will be used to maintain forest reserves for conservation purposes.**

The Foundation will operate as an independent, non-profit organisation and will be administered by a board of trustees.



Benefactors will be able to nominate which forest reserve, block, coupe or region they would like to sponsor. Only forests in reserves or proposed reserves will be eligible for sponsorship. Labor will seek charitable status for the Foundation.

The process will be totally transparent and accountable. The funds received and raised by the Foundation, and the manner in which they are spent, will be scrutinised by the Auditor-General.

The Foundation will be required to table an Annual Report in Parliament detailing the year's revenue and expenditure and the names of sponsors and the amounts contributed by each sponsor.

## **CREATING NEW JOBS AND SAFEGUARDING EXISTING JOBS**

Over the past two decades there has been a significant decline in employment in the timber industry.

While many jobs in logging and saw milling have been replaced by machinery and technology, new jobs have emerged in manufacturing and value-adding of timber products and the plantation timber industry.

Labor will create 130 new jobs in forest management and assist timber workers in the transition to an estimated 1,080 new, direct jobs that will be created in plantation management and the Albany chip mill commencing in 2001. Additional jobs will be generated through new value-adding initiatives in the timber industry.

Labor will also work to safeguard existing jobs in the native timber industry, including the 100 employees of Pemberton karri mill.

### **Labor will:**

- **create 100 new, secure jobs in CALM and the Forest Products Commission, with priority given to displaced timber workers, in a targeted dieback strategy; in national park and reserve management, including positions as rangers; in infrastructure development; and in fire and feral animal control;**
- **create 30 jobs in an escalated jarrah and karri regrowth thinnings program utilising displaced timber workers;**
- **provide incentives for plantation companies to employ displaced timber workers among the estimated 850 new direct jobs that will be created in the plantation industry in 2001; a figure that is expected to rise to more than 1,250 in 2008 (Department of Transport, 2000);**





- **work to protect the jobs of the 100 employees at Pemberton karri mill by offering up to \$5 million for retooling and value-adding at the mill, based on regrowth karri and possibly marri and plantation timbers;**
- **offer incentives for the operators of Albany's new plantation-based wood chipping mill to employ timber workers among its 230 employees. The mill will commence operating in 2001;**
- **provide up to \$100,000 for a mobile mill capable of converting waste from logging operations into blocks suitable for charcoal, rather than this waste being burnt on the forest floor by CALM. This proposal could employ up to five displaced timber workers;**
- **allocate up to \$500,000 for a training and development program at the Pemberton Aquaculture Centre, which would train 12-18 persons each year for work in the aquaculture industry. This initiative will be implemented in consultation with the aquaculture industry, Manjimup TAFE, the South West Development Commission and the Pemberton Progress Association;**
- **encourage the establishment of a laminated veneer lumber (LVL) plant in Western Australia based on public softwood resources, creating an estimated 140 direct jobs (URS/BIS Shrapnel, 2000);**
- **investigate the feasibility of assisting the establishment of a medium density fibreboard (MDF) plant and/or a particleboard plant based on plantation resources; and**
- **support the establishment of an environmentally and economically viable pulp mill combined with a plantation-based wood chipping facilities, creating between 80 and 230 new jobs (URS/BIS Shrapnel, 2000).**

## **WORKER AND INDUSTRY ASSISTANCE PACKAGE**

Labor recognises that its forest policy will impact on some timber industry employees. A Labor Government will implement a comprehensive package to assist both workers in the timber industry and the timber industry itself.

Labor's package will assist displaced timber workers to find new, secure jobs and assist the industry to make the transition to regrowth and plantation timber and add greater value to our timber resource.

### **Labor will:**

- **institute an assistance package with an initial budget of \$57 million to assist the timber industry, its workers, their families and communities. This will involve an additional \$18 million of funding. This package will consist of a Worker Assistance Program and a Timber Industry Assistance Program.**





**The Worker Assistance Program includes:**

- a wage subsidy of \$200 per week (up to 16 weeks) to encourage employers to employ displaced timber workers;
- retraining for displaced timber workers to upgrade their skills;
- travel assistance to assist workers to attend interviews and look for work in areas other than where they reside;
- relocation assistance to assist workers with the cost of relocating to take up new employment;
- generous redundancy payments for those workers who wish to exit the industry;
- a Timber Industry Council (TIC) consisting of industry and union representatives to assist in the implementation of the Worker Assistance Program; and
- Forest Liaison Officers (FLOs) located in major regional centres to assist workers with access to information and advice, in liaison with the TIC.

**The Timber Industry Assistance Program includes:**

- an incentive program consisting of grants and low-interest loans for new projects incorporating value-adding, technology upgrades, better recovery and utilisation of resource and improved log harvesting, extraction and handling systems;
- headworks assistance (utilities connection);
- consultancy subsidies such as feasibility studies and business and marketing planning;
- subsidies for local government charges;
- haulage assistance to help timber mills with any potential additional haulage costs; and
- a Business Exit Assistance program to assist businesses directly affected by Labor's forest policy that wish to exit the industry.

Labor will also undertake the following initiatives to support the timber industry and timber workers and create new opportunities in the South West:

- **assist the industry with the rapid transition to whole bole logging; and sawmills will be obliged to extract as much timber from the whole tree as is possible;**
- **encourage further development of the marri sawn timber industry and provide support to companies that undertake sawing and value-adding of marri sawlogs;**
- **work with the timber industry and TAFE to set up a course in Forest Management and Silviculture at Manjimup TAFE;**
- **consult with Edith Cowan University in Bunbury to expand the Environmental Science degree to give a greater emphasis on forest management, silviculture and wood technology; and**
- **investigate the feasibility of utilising the resources of the Forest Heritage Centre at Dwellingup and the Timber Utilisation Research Centre at Harvey to provide tertiary units in value-adding, kiln drying, gluing and fine wood preparation.**

## **FURNITURE AND FINE WOOD INDUSTRIES**

Labor believes that Western Australia's native timber industry must shift from a focus on structural timbers to more value-added products; including furniture, flooring and fine wood craft.

Western Australia has the potential to become a world leader in the production of well-designed, high value furniture utilising our unique native timbers.

Moreover, the fine wood industry in the South West has the potential to become the world centre for fine wood craft and generate new jobs and investment for the region.

**Labor will:**

- **allocate \$1 million of the \$57 million assistance package to the timber furniture industry to assist with interstate and international marketing;**
- **create a craftwood licensing system for local craftspeople and artisans. Licenses will only be granted to local Western Australian artisans and craftspeople who produce their work locally;**
- **investigate the feasibility of royalty subsidies based on value-adding and the proportion of timber utilised;**



- **promote greater value-adding and furniture production of regrowth karri, marri and plantation timbers. Labor is aware of some of the value-adding developments that are occurring outside of Western Australia. For example, a South African furniture company is manufacturing high-quality furniture from plantation karri that has been certified by the independent Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Labor will work to progress similar value-adding developments in Western Australia;**
- **assist furniture companies through the Timber Industry Assistance Program to purchase machinery and other infrastructure if they can demonstrate a potential to generate employment, especially local employment, and revenue;**
- **investigate the feasibility of allocating a nominal proportion of timber royalties to the furniture and fine wood industries to assist them with marketing and business development; and**
- **support tourism initiatives through the Western Australian Tourism Commission that promote fine wood craft as a tourism attraction in the South West.**

## **FOREST MANAGEMENT AND CALM**

Labor recognises the importance of a vibrant, sustainable timber industry to the South West in terms of employment and investment generation.

In recent years concerns have been raised about the management of our native forests, including the unsustainable logging of these forests, and conflicts within the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Labor believes that to address these concerns, the timber industry has to shift from a focus on old-growth forests to the utilisation of regrowth and plantation timber, and CALM's production and conservation roles must be genuinely split.

### **Better Forest Management**

**Labor will:**

- **manage the forests in line with the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management (ESFM) to ensure the overall health of our forests and rivers;**
- **undertake an independent audit of log stockpiles and forest "waste" with the aim of utilising as much of this timber as possible;**
- **immediately initiate a review of current royalties for native timber and the process by which they are levied to ensure that royalties reflect the true value of our native timber;**

- undertake a comprehensive review of stream and river logging buffers to ensure their adequacy in protecting our waterways from salinity, degradation and turbidity; and
- rigorously develop and apply management policies and strategies to ensure that all timber operations are ecologically sustainable.

## **Better Government Management**

Labor will:

- ensure that Westrail ceases the utilisation of native timber for new railway sleepers, and shifts to a total reliance on alternative materials such as concrete, steel and plantation timber;
- ensure that, where possible, Homeswest gives preference to builders who utilise materials other than native timber in the construction of new dwellings;
- review the effectiveness of the newly constituted Forest Products Commission, Conservation Commission and reconstituted Department of Conservation and Land Management;
- introduce legislation to give the Minister for the Environment the final say on the implementation and the development of the Forest Management Plan; and
- amend the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* to include reference to Indigenous people and joint management in the objects of the Act.

## **Better Community Involvement**

Labor will:

- establish regional and city forest forums to allow community and stakeholder input into the development of the next Forest Management Plan; and
- implement meaningful joint management strategies for conservation reserves in full consultation with Indigenous people. Joint management strategies will include Indigenous people in management and in decision making, and provide them with employment and training opportunities.

## **DIEBACK STRATEGY**

Dieback, the death of jarrah trees and many species of native flora caused by the presence of *Phytophthora* fungus in the soil, is a critical issue in Western Australia's forests and in the conservation lands elsewhere in the South West.

Dieback is widespread throughout the State's production forests and is resulting in a serious loss in productivity. The species of *Phytophthora* are also present in national parks and nature reserves throughout the South West, including important and well known places such as Lesueur, D'Entrecasteaux, Stirling Ranges, Two Peoples Bay, Fitzgerald River, and Cape Arid National Parks.

Dieback is regarded as the most serious conservation issue in the South West, yet it is an issue that has been handled very poorly by the Court Government.

### **Labor will:**

- **institute a comprehensive review of CALM's policies and programs relating to dieback control and management, with a view to protecting remaining old growth and high conservation value forests from infection and improving dieback quarantine practices to protect nature conservation values throughout the South West;**
- **implement a targeted control and protection program - including fungicide treatments - to protect nature conservation values;**
- **require the development and maintenance of a comprehensive, up-to-date map database of the occurrence of dieback throughout the South West that can be used by field staff and members of the public to minimise the further spread of dieback; and**
- **continue to support quality research into methods to control dieback.**

## **PLANTATIONS**

Labor believes that Western Australia's timber industry must shift from old-growth forest to regrowth and plantation timber. The Western Australian plantation industry currently supplies three major products: sawlogs from softwoods (pine) for structural purposes, woodchips from both pine and bluegums and medium density fibreboard (MDF).

A recent Department of Transport report has found that bluegum plantations can more than offset job losses associated with the end of logging in old-growth forests.

The report, entitled "Bluegum Plantation Industry - Regional Transport Infrastructure", found that 1,826 new jobs, including 850 new direct jobs, would be created in 2001 - mostly in planting and maintaining bluegums.



This figure is expected to increase to 2,757 by 2008. The report estimates that 1,253 of these jobs will be direct, sustained employment; with another 1,504 indirect jobs.

Furthermore, with the rapid growth of plantings in Western Australia in recent years, Labor believes that the industry has the potential to expand into more sophisticated production - including laminated veneer lumber (LVL) and particleboard. Plantations will also play a vital role in mitigating land degradation and salinity, and contributing to a reduction in carbon in the atmosphere.

## **Labor will:**

- **provide incentives for plantation companies to employ displaced timber workers among the estimated 850 new direct jobs that will be created in the plantation industry in 2001, a figure that is expected to rise to more than 1,250 in 2008 (Department of Transport, 2000);**
- **assist the industry with infrastructure that will provide for value-adding of plantation timber;**
- **support the \$50 million plantation-based wood chipping mill near Albany that will create 230 new jobs when it opens in 2001;**
- **support the establishment of an environmentally and economically viable pulp mill combined with a plantation-based wood chipping facilities and assist industry to achieve these goals;**
- **encourage the establishment of a laminated veneer lumber (LVL) plant in Western Australia based on public softwood resources;**
- **investigate the feasibility of assisting the establishment of a medium density fibreboard (MDF) plant and/or a particleboard plant based on plantation resource;**
- **investigate incentives, including options within the State taxation regime, to encourage long-term investment in both hardwood and softwood plantations for sawlog production;**
- **initiate a domestic marketing push to ensure that other building materials, including plantation timber and steel, replace jarrah and karri in structural uses;**
- **instigate a program to identify cleared agricultural land, which is providing only marginal economic returns, and degraded land for plantations;**
- **assist research into other plantation species with a view to investigating opportunities for processing specialty timber products; and**
- **examine the existing road and rail network in the South West to determine where improvements are needed to best meet the requirements of the plantation industry.**

## **CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND TRADING**

Labor believes that our native forests and plantations can make a huge contribution to meeting Australia's greenhouse emission targets.

Furthermore, Western Australia is set to gain both environmentally and financially from world emissions trading.

### **Labor will:**

- **work to enact legislation similar to the New South Wales *Carbon Rights Legislation Amendment Act 1998* to recognise in law the rights associated with carbon sequestered from the atmosphere by trees and forests and enshrine carbon rights on land titles. This legislation will allow for carbon trading and carbon forestry investments to occur in Western Australia ahead of proposed greenhouse emission trading laws that will need to be enacted by the Federal Government;**
- **continue the expansion of Western Australia's plantation estate for its wood and carbon sequestration values; and**
- **end logging in old-growth forests, not just because of their natural and aesthetic value, but also for the role they play in reducing carbon in the atmosphere.**

## **TOURISM AND RECREATION**

Labor's commitment to the protection of all old-growth and high conservation value forest and its proposal for a Walpole Wilderness Area are integral to Labor's Ecotourism and Recreation Strategy.

Labor believes that our forests can play a vital role in the expansion of Western Australia's ecotourism industry and can provide a major boost to regional employment, particularly in the South West.

Labor is also committed to the expansion of regional and rural tourism, and is proposing a number of initiatives to assist regional tourism.

More information will be provided in Labor's Ecotourism and Tourism policies, which will be released later in the election campaign.