

# *The Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils (Inc)*

PO Box 604  
Manjimup WA 6258  
Phone 0472 712 921  
e-mail: [wbsa@live.com.au](mailto:wbsa@live.com.au)  
ABN 84 209 500 433



9<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West Forest Region of Western Australia  
Project Officer  
Office of the Director  
Sustainable Forest Management  
Department of Parks and Wildlife  
Lock Bag 104  
Bentley Deliver Centre WA 6983

Dear Sir/Madam,

***Submission on the “Report on Progress with the Implementation of the Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West Forest Region of Western Australia”***

The Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils, (formerly the Warren Blackwood Strategic Alliance) is a not for profit organisation with members from the Shires of Manjimup, Bridgetown-Greenbushes and Nannup. It was formed in 2001 following the previous restructure of the Timber Industry to work as a collective body on issues affecting the Warren Blackwood area.

Whilst the purpose of this submission is not to seek a reversal or change of previous decisions it is worthwhile looking at the effect that was felt in our Region. Nearly 1000 direct job losses were registered in 2001 and this does not reflect the true job losses and the devastating effect that is still being felt in the Region, particularly in Manjimup which has failed to attract new Industry or population growth and very few of the promised remedies have eventuated. The subject continues to divide the community and a negative perception surrounding the Industry remains. The Native Timber Industry is still a major employer in each of the towns, Manjimup 2.5%, Bridgetown-Greenbushes 6.1% and Nannup 16%.

The recent job losses and proposed further job losses in Greenbushes is devastating to a small community of a population of 500 people. Also, despite Greenbushes being

identified as a regional industrial site, the State Government has failed to progress final planning of the site which is necessary to establish the site in order to attract new industry to provide job opportunities for those displaced by the timber industry restructure.

Of particular significance is the situation that occurred between the Federal and State Government in relation to the signing of the RFA document in May 1999 and the subsequent backflip by the State Government and the further refusal of the Federal Government to engage in the process from that point forward.

Despite the assurances in this latest document, little tangible benefit has occurred in our Region and further reductions in operations and employment has occurred.

**5.2 Part 2 Functioning of the Agreement, 5.2.1 Relationship to Statutory Obligations, Clause 19 States “Neither Party will seek to use existing or future legislation or a Government Agreement to undermine or impede this Agreement.**

It is stated that “The commitment was achieved”. We disagree with this comment on the basis that the RFA offered significantly higher yields available to industry that was adversely affected by the legislating of the Western Australian Government to create reserves in excess of those proposed under the RFA. This is further supported by comments on Page 15 “Since the RFA was signed, subsequent Western Australian and commonwealth governments made policy and legislative changes that affected the implementation of some of the milestones and commitments of the WA RFA”.

Further to this is **Clause 74**, which in part says “**As part of providing greater security of access to resources for Forest-based industry, the Commonwealth will not prevent enterprises obtaining, using or exporting timber,.....**”

Despite this, the WA FMP stipulated that industry could not export whole logs, directly in breach of the RFA and a decision that has severely impeded the sustainability and profitability of the Industry. Further to this are both Clauses 75 and 76, neither of which was achieved due to the changes implemented by the Western Australian Government.

It appears that the two processes of the RFA and FMP were fundamentally at odds and that no formal agreement between the Federal and State Governments existed. This allowed the State Government to develop a direction for the Forests that was politically motivated and created deep divide and turmoil within Forest Industry based

communities. It could be argued that considerable money was provided by both the Federal and State Governments in an attempt to manage this, but the truth is that very little of this money created new industry or employment in those areas affected.

The Report clearly demonstrates that the majority of the commitments made have been delivered in some form, but a great deal of those commitments were for planning, documenting and monitoring and the majority of the outcomes particularly in respect to the Industry and Communities did not eventuate and that no accountability or mitigation strategies for the Industry or Communities was considered by both the RFA and FMP processes. Great weight was placed on the protection of the environment and processes to ensure this protection was implemented, but no protection or measurable processes were afforded to Industry or communities. Payments through both the Federal and State Governments led to a mass exodus of businesses, workers and the associated skills of those people, far in excess of those directly employed within the Timber Industry.

The initial intent of the RFA was sound and the practices and processes applied would have resulted in a more sustainable and profitable industry, together with vibrant Forest communities, whilst still affording adequate protection to the forest environment. We note statements made by the Coalition prior to the election in regards to the Forest Industry and we look forward to further clarity on the benefits for our Regional communities. Further to this we would seek a commitment to align Federal and State Government's planning documents to avoid the situation that has occurred in Western Australia.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wade DeCampo". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Wade DeCampo  
President