



## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BRANCH

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# Media Release

## Independent research confirms the benefits of forestry

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An independent study has highlighted the primary social, environmental and economic impacts of the forestry industry in Western Australia.

Conducted by Dr Jackie Schirmer, Project Leader from the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University, the report looked at the forestry industry in Western Australia and its social and economic impacts.

Importantly, the report found that in 2005/06 the forestry industry employed in excess of 5,500 people in regional areas of Western Australia and delivered economic benefits of up to one billion dollars annually to the State.

Dr Schirmer said the majority of jobs within forestry were in the South West, where an increase in employment opportunities for younger Western Australians was a key factor for the viability of regional economies.

“From the evidence we gathered we know that 18 percent of the labour force resides in Nannup, with 16 percent based in Bridgetown-Greenbushes and 14 percent living in Manjimup. Nearly 40 percent of the industries total workforce is aged under 35 years and 18 percent are under the age of 25,” Dr Schirmer said.

The report also revealed that more than 80 percent of forestry workers were male and that the industry had a much higher proportion of full-time employment compared with other sections of the WA workforce where part-time and casual employment were common.

Dr Schirmer said employment in forestry in the Great Southern region had grown rapidly, rising from just 20 people in 1991 to 844 people in 2005/06.

Noting the significance of the study, Forest Products Commission (FPC) Acting General Manager Gavin Butcher said the research showed how the sustainably grown and managed forest products industry had delivered significant benefits through increased employment and new business growth in regional areas.

“While there is much work to be done to ensure the prosperity of the forestry industry, the FPC remains on-mission to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits to the people of Western Australia,” Mr Butcher said.

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Please note: audio file of an interview with Dr Schirmer accompanies this release.