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Media statement

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Greens poll perpetuates forestry myth

The Forest Products Commission (FPC) has described the findings of a recent poll on forestry as fabulously fictitious.

Conducted by the Australian Greens, the Galaxy poll took a predisposed approach by asking respondents if they agreed that the Federal Government should stop logging in native forests.

However, respondents were not told that a report from the Australian National University (ANU) had since been discredited by forestry professionals.

While the ANU report found that Australia's native forests contain a large amount of carbon which would be protected by ending native forest clearance, FPC General Manager Dr. Paul Biggs said research was incorrect and failed to reflect the true nature of the carbon storage cycle in forests.

"It seems the aim was to induce the public to perpetuate the myth that by ceasing to harvest in native forests will benefit the environment through carbon sequestration.

"Juvenile trees sequester a greater volume of carbon from the atmosphere than mature trees which, put simply, means a growing tree has the capacity to accumulate and store carbon. A fully-grown tree ceases its role as the lungs of nature and no longer draws carbon from the air, although it does retain the carbon it stored while en-route to maturity.

"Carbon remains locked up in the product it eventually becomes. The space in the forest taken up by the tree prior to harvest is occupied post-harvest by a juvenile tree which has a faster rate of carbon sequestration.

"From an environmental perspective, there are significant advantages of harvesting timber and replanting the area with seedlings which will absorb far more carbon as they grow to maturity," Dr Biggs said.

"Timber is renewable, and under FPC's management regimen is also sustainable.

Dr Biggs said that unlike the finite resources of coal, oil and gas which contain carbon and which cannot be regrown, timber will remain with us in perpetuity as a highly regarded, much sought-after material with a unique capacity to draw carbon from the air we breathe.

"Assertions such as those contained in the recent poll are little more than self-serving misinformation created by sections of the anti-forestry lobby whose stated goal is to terminate the existence of an industry which employs nearly 5,500 workers in WA.

"FPC harvests less than one per cent of Western Australia's native forest each year. The Commission's entire forestry operations are conducted on a sustainable basis and under principles of the acclaimed international certification, Australian Forestry Standard. WA isn't running out of trees. On the contrary, our foresters plant approximately four times the number of trees harvested and those young trees play a role as the lungs of nature by absorbing carbon from the air we breathe as they grow to maturity.

"FPC has a strong track record in protecting old growth forest. Logging is permanently prohibited in 1.26million hectares of reserves and our diligence and willingness for direct community engagement continues to assist in the discovery and protection of previously unmapped old growth forests.

"Genuine environmentalists agree that the world should be using more sustainably-harvested timber," he said.

Dr Biggs referred to an article in the Washington Times by Patrick Moore, co-founder of Greenpeace, chairman and chief scientist of Greenspirit Strategies Ltd which reaffirmed that, "One of the best ways to address climate change is to use more wood, not less. Wood is simply the most abundant, biodegradable and renewable material on the planet."

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