

## **Great Southern Forest - Executive Brief**

**The core of the Great Southern Forest proposal** is to reorient management of South East (SE) NSW public native forests from industrial logging to prioritise ecological integrity of our continent, climate stabilisation, water security and carbon sequestration, thereby activating new money and new jobs in the regional economy.

**The Great Southern Forest proposal** is a widely researched, solutions-based initiative for the carbon and biodiversity dense SE NSW native forests. It offers nature-based solutions to critical national and global problems at low cost and with great benefit for climate stabilisation, environmental and economic success, increased resilience and biodiversity, regional employment, Indigenous participation and social coherence. This new model of forest management is relevant and transferable nationally. Implementation of the proposal can reduce forest fragmentation enabling the connectedness and resilience to withstand and ameliorate a disrupted climate.

### **Great Southern Forest proposal recognises that:**

- forests are vital for climate stabilisation of the planet;
- existing mature plantations can meet Australia's timber needs;
- while the Regional Forest Agreement process provides a timely window of attention on native forests, its assumptions and outcomes are clearly outdated in the light of scientific evidence and the recognised importance of forests on climate and water cycles;
- the present system of management of SE native forests for timber extraction has overseen large environmental, economic, social and employment losses with inestimable damage to soil, water, biodiversity, wildlife, habitat and canopy thus drying out the forests.

**The Great Southern Forest vision**, in a new and ethically responsible way, recognises that public native forests have more significant values than their present use as a source of wood which can now be met by plantations. This vision entails changing management of these biodiverse ecosystems from destructive and loss-making logging under the failed RFA regimes to prioritise their crucial roles in the climate and water cycles, and to their major contributions to species diversity and community well-being.

New forest management arrangements can draw on the best current scientific advice, Indigenous knowledge and successful overseas models; train a highly skilled workforce for diverse new regional jobs in forest restoration; maximise carbon sequestration and climate mitigation benefits; share the value and respect regional communities have for the beauty and uniqueness of our native forests, and safeguard the conditions for Life for all their living creatures. Importantly, this is not a proposal for further reserves although this may be appropriate for some areas.

### **Great Southern Forest recommendations for the NSW and Commonwealth governments are to:**

- 1 Implement a timely re-orientation of management of public native forests in SE NSW from timber extraction to ecological integrity, climate stabilisation, water security and carbon sequestration;
- 2 Cease logging and woodchipping in SE NSW state native forests;
- 3 Enact the full transition to plantations for wood supply;
- 4 Terminate the Eden and Southern Regional Forest Agreements, reinstate full Commonwealth environmental protection and pilot this new model of forest management in SE NSW;
- 5 Ensure implementation of a Just Transitions program for SE NSW timber workers;
- 6 Extend Indigenous partnership in management and employment;
- 7 Prioritise forest preservation and restoration in the 432,575ha of SE public native State forests.