

TIMBER QUEENSLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

SENATE INQUIRY TOLD CLOSING NATIVE FORESTS & THE LACK OF MANAGEMENT IN QUEENSLAND NATIONAL PARKS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

A recent Senate Inquiry into Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures has received a number of submissions pointing out the folly of locking up well managed natural forests simply for political expediency.

The Barakula State Forest in the Queensland's south west is a case in point.

A submission by Barakula local, Dale Stiller and supported by the local Mayor, sawmillers, foresters, land management experts and local conservation groups challenges the value in locking this forest up, creating a fire risk of Black Saturday proportions and leaving biodiversity unprotected.

Covering 260 000 hectares Barakula State Forest has been subject to sustainable forest management for over 100 years. These forest practices are recognised by the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), an internationally recognised benchmark for best practice sustainable forest management.

Timber Queensland, the peak forest and timber industry body, says industry acknowledges and supports proper, sustainable forest management and has been increasing its' dependence on plantation forests to avoid high conservation native forests; but it is concerned about the Government's intention with respect to Barakula.

"This forest is not some untouched wilderness. It has been managed for over 100 years to produce both cypress pine and hardwood, has a comprehensive roading system for both management and fire control and still meets the international criteria of the PEFC," said Rod McInnes, CEO Timber Queensland.

Indeed, Queensland's leading forest conservationist, Aila Keto, writes in her report on the Western Queensland Native Forests in 2004:

With respect to overall eucalypt species richness, Barakula State Forest has a higher level than any national park in the Western area or in South East Queensland. When Barakula is considered together with the national parks and state forests that form a continuous area of forest from Carnarvon National Park to Isla Gorge National Park and north to Blackdown Tableland, an area of 119 5670 hectares, the number of eucalypt taxa totals 85. This compares favourably with the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (103 2649 hectares) which has 90 eucalypt taxa and for which World Heritage listing was based significantly on eucalypt diversity.

"The timber processing industry is negotiating with the State Government to reach a long term balance between wood supply and conservation outcomes. The current arrangements in Barakula are meeting this need admirably," said Rod McInnes.

"Industry remains disappointed that the Government refuses to engage in a broader scientific debate on the Barakula and seems content to shut down forest activity in this indisputably well managed forest whilst allowing mining and gas exploration to continue," he said

"The Government appears to be practicing double standards on this issue."

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