

WESTERN CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

An alliance of conservation groups focusing on western NSW

Briefing 1: OUTLINE OF BBS AND NANDEWAR PROPOSALS

- This proposal will protect 427,560 hectares in the two regions through transfer of State Forest estate to National Parks estate. It will also protect an additional 300,000 hectares over time through private land acquisition.
- This will include 391,650 ha of the highest conservation value State Forest areas in the BBS region (Map 1), which is only slightly more than the area of Government Option E, and a further 35,915 hectares of State Forests in the Nandewar region (Map 2).
- The proposal aims to achieve a **net increase in jobs** in the region through the implementation of a cypress thinning program, a regional tourism strategy, investment in new sustainable industries, National Parks jobs, and coal and gas extraction on cleared private land.
- Most of the new jobs in the region are **proposed for the smallest towns**, and particularly those in which the timber industry is affected.
- In coastal assessment processes, all of the structural adjustment funding was allocated to the timber industry. We propose that in the BBS the NSW Government follow a similar model as that used for **dairy deregulation structural adjustment**, where funding is provided for new and alternative industry proposals, rather than the timber industry only.
- This proposal includes an **immediate end to ironbark logging** and a phased transition away from firewood collection on public lands, a much improved Threatened Species Licence on public land, and strict regulation of logging on private lands.
- Ironbark logging is the most environmentally damaging practice in State Forests in the region. Ironbark has been logged heavily for more than a century and is now almost completely exhausted.
- Currently there are 7,000 cubic metres of ironbark being taken from the region. This proposal would result in the closure of the large ironbark mill, at Baradine, and its **replacement with a value-adding cypress plant**.
- The proposal advocates for an **Integrated Firewood Replacement Strategy** involving the legislated phase-out of firewood extraction from public lands over the next 5 years. It is proposed that the Strategy be funded at \$1 million per annum and implemented by NPWS in conjunction with the threat abatement plan for firewood collection.
- The Strategy would provide new jobs whilst mitigating the environmental impact of firewood collection through a range of innovative approaches.
- The proposal includes a **quota cut of 50-60%** for cypress logging in the region. All previous forest assessment processes have involved quota cuts of this scale prior to the reserve process (50% staged cuts in north-east NSW, 60% Eden).

- The current supply of cypress in the region is 72,000 cubic metres. This proposal will allow an on-going cypress industry at half this size – 36,000 cubic metres.
- This will enable the mills in small towns, which are heavily reliant on the timber industry to continue. It will ensure the cypress mills at Gulargambone, Gwabegar and Baradine continue at viable levels.
- The proposal allows for the **maintenance and/or increase of cypress export volumes** from the region. According to RACD (2002), the current export industry is only 15% of cypress quota in the region.
- The proposal will increase the overall value of the industry in the region through a cypress value-adding **glue-lamination plant** (or other appropriate value-adding facilities) at Baradine, **using cypress off-cuts**. The lamination plant would replace any jobs lost by closure of the ironbark mill.
- By establishing two briquette manufacturing plants, one each at Gulargambone and Gwabegar, using sawmill residues and possibly some thinnings, it would be possible to phase out firewood collection from our native woodlands.
- Providing a market for sawmill residues would make the mills more resilient and profitable and better able to cope with the reduction in quota. Compressed wood briquettes are an excellent fuel source as they are of high density and burn slowly generating good heat.
- Cypress oil is distilled from sawdust. It has been successfully trialed as an alternative to copper chrome arsenate (CCA), which is a standard termite proofing treatment for pine. This oil also has great potential for medicinal purposes, and it is thought it may equal tea-tree oil in the wide range of applications that it has.
- The distillery could process thinnings from both public and private land. Such a thinning program should increase the likelihood of a future cypress saw log resource in 30-50 years time. Post-distillation the sawdust can still be used for manufacture of briquettes.
- Ideally the Government could provide the start-up capital to enable these plants to be up and running within 12 months.