

Submission to Garnaut Climate Change Review - final report Harriett Swift

The interim Garnaut Climate Change Review did not adequately address the potential of native forests to store carbon or the emissions released when these forests are logged.

The study *Green Carbon - The role of natural forests in carbon storage* led by Professor Brendan Mackey of the Australian National University (released 6 August 2008) reveals that the carbon stored in Australia's native forests has been underestimated by a factor of three. For some areas, it is as high as ten.

Australia's native forests have the potential to sequester 2,000 million tonnes of carbon, it says.

Protecting them, according to Professor Mackey is no longer an option, it is essential. The carbon stored in natural forests is a larger and more reliable stock than the carbon stored in commercially logged forests and plantations.

The Mackey research shows that after protecting mature forests, the next biggest greenhouse impact we can make is to allow previously disturbed forest to regrow to maturity.

There is enormous potential for carbon sequestration in forest areas that have been logged if they are allowed to re-grow undisturbed by further intensive human activities, such as logging.

The diversity of age and species in a natural forest make it far more resilient against the variations in temperature and water supply that we can expect with climate change.

The ANU scientists have called on our Government to approach Australia's forests in the same way as those of developing countries.

Australia runs the risk of looking hypocritical when we tell neighbouring countries not to log their forests while we continue to woodchip our own.

The Government's Green Paper recognises the benefits of tree planting, but totally ignores native forest destruction and degradation. The Garnaut Review has an opportunity to challenge this.

The exemption of GHG emissions from native forest logging from the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is worrying, but can still be rectified. Including it in an Emissions Trading Scheme was not necessarily the most effective means of realizing the benefits of green carbon in any case. It may be best dealt with by other instruments. Native forest logging is one of the biggest greenhouse polluters, nationally and globally. It is 20 % of the global problem and should be the subject of 20% of the solutions, and yet it has been left out as if it is greenhouse neutral.

Currently, in the Eden region of SE NSW approximately 95% of timber felled is woodchipped. As paper products, these have a life of two to three years.

Even manufactured wood products are mostly low value, short lived items such as pallets, which usually end up as landfill or are chipped as mulch within a very few years. Current plantation stocks are sufficient to meet nearly all the national demand for wood and paper products and we do not need to log native forests.

As the international market for native forest woodchips dries up, the forestry industry in Australia is looking towards biomass power generation to maintain its profitability.

The Green Paper would also exempt emissions from combustion or processing of native forest biomass for biofuels or electricity. These forest furnace emissions would receive a zero rating. This is totally unacceptable.

The huge potential of natural forests to store carbon must be recognised in Government policies against climate change.