

# PROTECTING NATIVE FORESTS, PROTECTING THE CLIMATE

## Fighting the climate crisis, restoring nature, and a just transition for workers and communities

By protecting Australia's native forests we act on the climate emergency, preserve places we love for future generations, protect our water supplies, lessen bushfire risk, and save threatened species from extinction.

Australia's native forests are unique and beautiful; they are home to some of our most iconic wildlife, are unceded Country for traditional owners with precious totems and songlines woven through them, and store enormous amounts of carbon. Despite that, Labor and Liberal governments have permitted and overseen decades of native forest logging that destroys our environment and releases over 11 million tonnes of carbon each year.<sup>1</sup>

The Greens 'Protecting Native Forests, Protecting the Climate' plan is an integrated approach of immediate action on the climate crisis by protecting Australia's forests and banking the carbon benefits of ending logging, funding ecological restoration and new jobs, and supporting regional workers and communities through a just transition.

Our forests should be protected, not commodified. We must not allow big corporations to commodify them through carbon offsets, enabling other environmental and climate destruction from these companies, which will continue to fuel the climate crisis. The carbon value of ending logging and protecting our forests should benefit the climate, not be traded away.

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<sup>1</sup> The Tree Projects. 'Our forest carbon'. The Tree Projects. 2022.  
<https://www.thetreeprojects.com/forestcarbon>

## THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ End the environmental destruction and emissions from native forest logging, by acting to protect forests across Australia;
- ▲ Fund the ecological restoration that's needed to restore our precious native forests after decades of environmental vandalism;
- ▲ Support a just transition for workers and communities by ensuring workers aren't left behind;
- ▲ Create new, sustainable green jobs in areas where native forest logging is ending, and;
- ▲ Ensure the carbon value of ending logging helps the climate rather than being traded away to benefit coal, oil and gas corporations.

## PROTECTING NATIVE FORESTS IS REAL ACTION ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

We are in the midst of a climate emergency. Without an urgent reduction in our carbon emissions, we risk catastrophe - to do nothing is to risk everything.

Despite the scale of the challenge we're facing, Labor and Liberal governments have enabled native forest logging to continue unchecked, worsening the climate crisis. Annual emissions from native forest logging in NSW<sup>2</sup> and Tasmania<sup>3</sup> alone are equivalent to the annual

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<sup>2</sup> Sanger, J. 2022. *NSW Forest Carbon: An effective climate change solution*. Tasmania: The Tree Projects.  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60b20f09dcfc4f2bd6b0c171/t/63ddcef58bf792078c351e0f/1675480953905/NSW+Carbon+Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Sanger, J. 2022. *Tasmania's Forest Carbon: From emissions disaster to climate solution*. Tasmania:

emissions of nearly two million cars. It's estimated that ending native forest logging would save approximately 15.5 million tonnes of projected carbon dioxide emissions per year<sup>4</sup>.

Despite the emissions impact of native forest logging, the scale of the problem is often hidden in a carbon accounting framework that doesn't separate out the additional emissions driven by native forest logging.

As part of the Greens package, the Commonwealth would spend \$5 million over

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The Tree Projects, The Wilderness Society & Tasmanian Climate Collective.  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60b20f09dcfc4f2bd6b0c171/t/63ddce424a52643d2f6008cf/1675480999178/Tasmanias+Forest+Carbon.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Lindenmayer, D. Mackey, B & Keith, H. 2022. "Stopping native forest logging is the only way to meet our net zero targets." The Canberra Times, 14 October, 2022.  
<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/794008/this-is-the-only-way-australia-can-meet-its-net-zero-targets/>

four years on improving carbon accounting, to fully reflect the benefits of ending native forest logging.

## **BANKING, NOT TRADING, THE CARBON BENEFITS OF ENDING NATIVE FOREST LOGGING**

As part of taking real action on the climate crisis, state governments that end native forest logging must commit to not using forests to create offsets for further fossil fuel expansion.

At the current rates of emission reduction, the Labor government won't meet their net zero goal by 2050.<sup>5</sup> The Greens plan to protect Australia's forests provides a clear pathway to reaching our zero emissions targets, limiting global heating and protecting our climate.

## **CLOSING THE LOOPHOLE IN OUR ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS**

For far too long, regional forest agreements, or RFAs, established between the federal and state governments, have exempted native forest logging from the environmental protections we have in place. These RFAs, covering significant parts of Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, and New South Wales, have fundamentally undermined the Commonwealth's responsibility to protect our environment. They have created a

loophole that entire truckloads of logs are being driven through.

RFAs were allegedly intended to protect complex ecosystems, and ensure threatened species were protected, as well as provide sustainable timber supply, and protect jobs. In their 2020 report, *Creating Jobs, Protecting Forests?*, The Wilderness Society concluded that RFAs have failed on every front.<sup>6</sup>

The Greens introduced legislation to repeal the RFAs, and close the loophole that has given industry a free pass to avoid national environmental protections.

## **SUPPORTING STATE GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE MEANINGFUL, COORDINATED ACTION**

After decades of environmental vandalism, state governments in Victoria and Western Australia have responded to First Nations groups, the Greens, community campaigners and advocates and ended native forest logging in their jurisdictions.

But this still leaves Regional Forest Agreements in place in New South Wales and Tasmania, where state governments show no sign of ending the destruction. We need a permanent, national ban on native forest logging across the country.

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<sup>5</sup> Climate Action Tracker. 'Australia'. Climate Action Tracker. August, 2022.  
<https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/australia/#>

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<sup>6</sup> *Creating Jobs, Protecting Forests? An Analysis of the State of the Nation's Regional Forest Agreements.* The Wilderness Society.

The Greens plan would provide a commitment of \$500 million per year for two decades, to be provided to state governments that end native forest logging.

The funding would be allocated between state governments, with \$400 million allocated on the basis of the most recent log harvesting volumes. The remaining \$100 million will be allocated between jurisdictions (including the Northern Territory) as negotiated by the Commonwealth.

## FUNDING ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Australia's forest estate is degraded after decades of environmental vandalism, and needs meaningful investment to restore it to its full potential. The Commonwealth and state governments would be required to allocate a major proportion of the \$10 billion to ecological restoration. These projects would provide significant employment in areas such as restoring previously logged forests to their carbon retention potential, including where post-logging regeneration has failed; pest and weed control; effective, ecologically appropriate and culturally-informed fire management, and other projects that help restore and protect the incredible beauty of Australia's native forests.

## A JUST TRANSITION FOR WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES

The payments to each state would be jointly managed by the Commonwealth and each state. Regions and communities which previously had native forest logging and

processing of native forest wood products as a part of their economies would be supported to develop and implement regional integrated ecological and economic development plans which would include forest management and decarbonisation projects.

Projects would include preferential tender arrangements to prioritise the employment of workers previously employed in native forest logging and wood processing.

Funding would also include the ability to fund a period of transition payments for workers impacted by the ending of native forest logging if there is a gap in workers finding other employment.

Funding for tourism and recreation projects such as the development of four wheel drive and camping facilities, walking and cycling paths, and facilities would all provide sustainable, green jobs in local communities.

Labor and Liberal federal governments have so far refused to engage with the need for a just transition for workers, leaving regional communities unsupported in the midst of a patchwork of state transitions. Only the Greens have a clear plan that will protect Australia's forests and climate, fund ecological restoration, and support regional workers and communities.

**FIND ALL OUR POLICIES:**

[greens.org.au/platform](https://greens.org.au/platform)