

The 2016 - 2017 Annual General Meeting of the South-West Forests Defence Foundation Inc. will be held at **6.00 pm on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017, at 112 Eric Street, Cottesloe. Please note the starting time and venue.**

The agenda is as follows:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of previous AGM
3. President's report
4. Treasurer's report
5. Auditor's report
6. Election of office bearers for 2018
7. Other business

Nominations for the positions of President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer and five committee members are called for.



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**SOUTH-WEST FORESTS DEFENCE FOUNDATION INC.  
PO BOX 203, NEDLANDS WA 6009**

**NEWSLETTER – November 2017  
Notice of Annual General Meeting**

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## Editorial

In the lead-up to the State election, the ALP made some strong commitments on forests.

It promised to immediately conserve High Conservation Value forests and move to transition the native forestry industry to sustainably managed plantations and farm forestry.

Labor's State policy includes the following statements:

*"Biodiversity is crucial to environmental sustainability and must therefore be protected."*

*"Our native forests are a national treasure, and deserve to be treated as such."*

*"More can be done to protect our unique wildlife, native forests and community heritage, particularly in the Kimberley and south-west regions of Western Australia."*

*"Labor will investigate incentives to support a plantation industry and secure the jobs of those workers supported by the forestry industry."*

Many Western Australians will agree with these statements and recall that the big advances for our forests have come with the election of an ALP government.

In 1983, the Burke Labor Government was elected with the commitment to make the Shannon Basin a national park. Foundation members will remember the long campaign in which we were actively involved to achieve this welcome result.

In 2001, the Gallop Labor Government was elected promising to protect old growth forests. The Foundation played a big role in the WA Forests Alliance's 10-year campaign to have old growth forests protected.

We must remind the McGowan Government of the ALP's good record on forest protection and encourage them to honour their election commitments on this issue.

**We enclose a copy of a petition asking the Legislative Council to ensure the urgent implementation of the ALP's commitments and ask you to get signatures and return it to Wafa convener Jess Beckerling by 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018.**

## Saving Barrabup forest

Barrabup is a forest on the outskirts of Nannup.

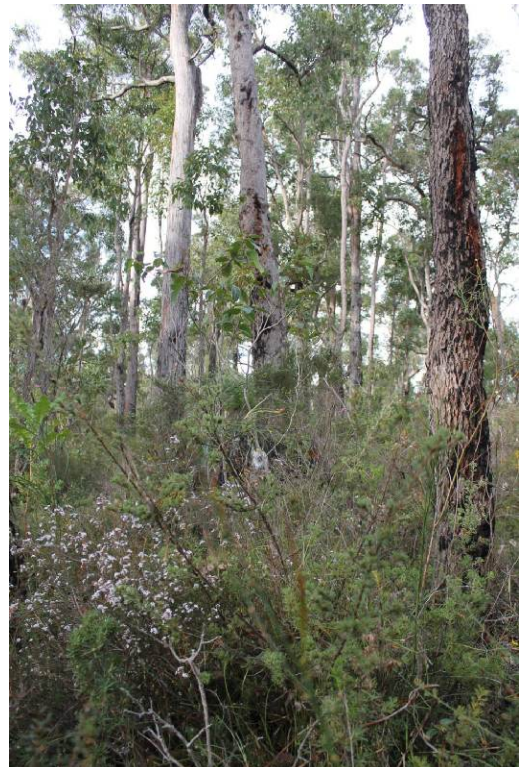
Earlier this year, Nannup residents discovered that the Forest Products Commission was preparing to log an area ('coupe') in Barrabup next to the Vasse Highway just five kilometres north of the town, and had pushed a major logging road through the middle.

The area scheduled for logging is ancient jarrah and marri forest very rich in ecological and Aboriginal heritage values and is the largest area of jarrah forest so close to Nannup that has never been intensively logged.

A local group, the Barrabup Conservation Group (BCG), was quickly formed, and members nominated the 530-hectare coupe for assessment as old growth forest by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

The department conducted the assessment and found 43 hectares of jarrah old growth forest and 1.2 hectares of what had been old growth that had been destroyed by roadworks.

The BCG along with the WA Forest Alliance is now working to stop any further logging in Barrabup as the forest has more value to the whole community left standing than logged.



*Old growth jarrah in Barrabup forest near Nannup.  
Photo by Ellie McKie*

## Protecting all old growth jarrah forest

The Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) has changed the definition of old growth jarrah and reduced the amount of forest that must be protected.

This sleight of hand came to light when local residents in Nannup nominated magnificent jarrah in Barrabup forest on the outskirts of town as potential old growth.

Under the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013*, the Conservation Commission assessed community nominations of potential old growth forest. For jarrah forest, it set a benchmark of five logged stumps per hectare.

Under the *Forest Management Plan 2014-2023*, the responsibility for assessing community nominations passed from the Conservation Commission to the Department of Parks and Wildlife, now DBCA. It quietly weakened the definition from five to two stumps per hectare.

The Barrabup *Review of Old Growth Forest Status* conducted by DBCA and released in October found that there were 43 hectares of old growth that will now be protected along with 16 hectares of previously unmapped Diverse Ecotype Zones identified during the assessment that DBCA had failed to notice.

However, the WA Forest Alliance (Wafa) and the Barrabup Conservation Group (BCG) reject this result,

Parts of Barrabup that would have met the definition of old growth a few months ago are now on the chopping block because bureaucrats in DBCA quietly changed the definition of old growth jarrah.

The agencies involved in the logging of the native forests are not taking care of the south-west's unique and irreplaceable ecological and cultural values. A full independent review of the identification and protection of High Conservation Value forest is the only way to resolve these issues and ensure our precious south-west forests are being properly protected.

## Another bad excuse to chop down trees

The most recent assault on our forests dreamed up by people looking for any excuse to chop down trees and sell logs is Mechanical Fuel Load Reduction (MFLR).

Very quietly, without any community consultation, the Commonwealth Government coughed up \$1.5 million for trials in NSW, Victoria and WA of this excuse to log in all categories of land – state forest, national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves.

The WA trial, near Collie, began with 40 per cent of the forest block mechanically ‘fuel reduced’ to a basal area\* of 12 square metres. This means very few trees have been left standing.

The obligatory burn (which MFLR is supposed to replace) was scheduled for spring 2017 but has been postponed till autumn 2018.

In the documentation for the trial, there is no mention of soil compaction, which will be extensive because the felled trees will be removed for sale as biomass.

Forestry machines cause soil compaction, leading to significant changes in the soil structure and moisture conditions.

Research has found it can take more than 50 years for compacted jarrah forest soils to return to pre-logging levels, and it is not known if this is fully achievable.

There is no mention of the inevitable introduction and spread of *Phytophthora* dieback, long a serious problem in WA's jarrah forests.

The give-away is that the trial focuses on forests, not any other type of vegetation although coastal heath, for example, is possibly more flammable, with more lives and property at risk from wildfire than forest.

Conservationists Australia-wide are horrified by the proposal to introduce MFLR so we have another battle on our hands.

\* ‘Basal area’ is the sum of the cross-sectional areas of trees in a given stand measured at 1.3 metres above the ground and expressed as square metres per hectare (one hectare = 10,000 square metres).

## World Heritage listing for the karri forests?

The question of whether the karri forests are worthy of nomination for World Heritage listing is now being seriously considered. In fact, three different people, all highly qualified to help prepare a nomination, have come up with the same idea at the same time. It's an idea whose time has come.

The area that could be considered for World Heritage nomination would comprise all protected areas making a significant contribution to the karri theme, extending from Boranup in the west to the Porongurups in the east.

Such a nomination would of necessity involve multiple land parcels, some of which are not connected.

Of the four natural heritage criteria specified in the Operational Guidelines two appear to have most potential for use in nomination:

**Criterion (ix)** *“be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;”*

The fact that the karri forests are the only tall eucalypt forests in the world to have lost their rainforest understorey makes them distinctive as one that demonstrates survival of extreme climatic events, demonstrating

*“on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial ... ecosystems and communities....”*

**Criterion (x)** *“contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation.”*

The karri country appears to have a good prospect to meet criterion (x).

It would be best to seek qualification on both (ix) and (x) remembering that ‘biological diversity’ under the Biological Diversity Convention is ecosystems and communities as well as species diversity.

One of the potential great benefits of preparing a World Heritage nomination is the forced review of the conservation and management in and around the area to be nominated. Almost invariably this results in identification of shortcomings and may lead to their being remedied.

This may be important for putting such matters as old growth, connectivity and fire regime on the political agenda and getting resolution of issues that may be a barrier to a good World Heritage nomination.

A clear benefit that can flow from World Heritage listing is tourism. Provided that the tourism strategic planning is integrated with the management of the area's conservation values, real benefits can flow from listing.

Before a proposed World Heritage nomination is launched, it is important to ensure that there is a ‘champion’ within State Government who is supportive and prepared to take the initiative. There is a danger that if an NGO launched the proposal it could antagonise government and reduce the prospects of moving forward.

A community group might lay the groundwork with preparation of data relevant to World Heritage, perhaps even proceeding to the point of preparing a draft ‘Statement of Outstanding Universal Values’ and/or a well-documented case to be submitted to government. The Foundation could well be that community group.



Old growth karri forest. Photo by Simon Neville