

LEADING AUSTRALIAN CLIMATE-CHANGE SCIENTIST CALLS FOR REVIEW OF PUBLIC FOREST MANAGEMENT

One of Australia's leading climate-change and environmental scientists says it's time to review the management of publicly owned forests across the country.

Professor Brendan Mackey, who will be one of the keynote speakers at a national Forests and Climate Forum at the Australian National University on Saturday, August 13, says Australia's native forests have significant carbon stocks and their conservation plays an important role in climate change mitigation. He says put simply the forests are now more valuable in the ground than out.

Professor Mackey says the government should move toward a comprehensive carbon accounting and valuation system which reflects the significant contribution native forest conservation makes towards mitigating climate change. He says the role of native forests in combating climate change is recognised in the Federal Government's Clean Energy Futures legislation and complementary policies are now needed.

"Protecting and restoring the carbon stocks in native forests would be an important step forward toward a comprehensive response to the climate change problem. Australia is fortunate in having an efficient plantation forest sector which can provide the sawlogs and woodchips needed by industry. Our native forests could be managed for the ecosystems services they are best at providing – storing carbon, regulating fresh water supplies, and wildlife habitat.

"It is timely to review forest management arrangements to better reflect the role of the national reserve system and conservation management in climate change mitigation. If we put a price on carbon, then we need to recognize the economic value of native forests in storing carbon. Ecosystem carbon stocks are long-lived and stable, and their natural biodiversity make them more resilient to disturbances including fire and climate change."

Brendan Mackey is a professor of environmental science in the Fenner School of Environment and Society, The Australian National University. He is a member of the Council of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

The national Forests and Climate Forum brings together high-profile economists, scientists, politicians, conservationists and other influencers to discuss the importance of biodiverse and carbon-dense native forests in mitigating the effects of climate change in Australia. Forum facilitator Mike Thompson says it's critical that policymakers get a grip on the real economic value of native forests, and understand the huge cost to all Australians of continued impacts such as logging.

The national Forests and Climate Forum will be held from 9am, Saturday 13th August, at the John Curtin School of Medical Research, 131 Garran Road, Australian National University, Canberra.

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