



Statements of commitment:

Engagement with Noongar Peoples in the South West of Western Australia

Preamble and background

This document applies to staff and contractors of the Forest Products Commission (FPC) whose work relates to FPC operations on *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* lands in the South West. It outlines the principles and key practices to ensure the protection and conservation of the value of the land to the culture and heritage of Noongar Peoples. The Noongar people are the traditional owners of the South West and there are 14 groups that make up the Noongar nation.

The FPC has temporary access to certain publicly owned land to conduct timber harvest, forest treatment, and replanting activities. Some disturbance to the forest occurs due to roading and timber harvesting. These impacts are usually localised and short term.

While the focus of this document is for publicly owned native forest lands, it is recognised that some of FPC managed plantations comprising exotic trees, also occur on public land.

The FPC has a legislative responsibility under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* and the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* to ensure FPC's activities do not impact negatively on Noongar heritage and cultural values, including Aboriginal Sites (both registered and unregistered). Much of that land is subject to registered native title claims under the *Native Title Act 1993*.



Significant trees such as this are important to Aboriginal culture and therefore these are identified and protected.

Statements of respect, acknowledgment, and intent

- FPC acknowledges that Noongar people are the traditional owners of the lands and waters of the South West, and specifically on lands upon which FPC carries out planning and operational activities.
- Noongar people have at least 40,000 years of experience in caring for country.
- The FPC acknowledges the cultural and legislative rights of Noongar people to carry out cultural activities within forest areas.
- FPC acknowledges the importance of early engagement and commits to working cooperatively with appropriate native title claim groups (and their legal representative bodies) within areas of FPC's operations that impact or potentially impact on native title or cultural interests.
- The FPC will seek to have meaningful ongoing consultation with Noongar people and recognises that registered claim groups are an interface between FPC and the Noongar community.
- The FPC recognises that engagement with Noongar people takes time and where applicable will make every effort to engage at an early stage of the planning process.
- The Department of Parks and Wildlife (Parks and Wildlife) is a primary source of guidance to the FPC on native title matters and also in the protection and conservation of Aboriginal cultural and heritage values within the conservation estate.
- The role of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is also important and FPC will seek its advice where relevant.
- The FPC accepts that forms of engagement will vary depending on the need and relevance.
- FPC commits to developing staff understanding of Noongar culture and encourages staff to undergo cultural awareness training.





Land types within the South West in which FPC and its agents work are:

- 1) Native forests comprising State forest and timber reserves (subject to the *Forest Management Plan 2014-2013*, administered primarily through Parks and Wildlife). This type is known as the 'Conservation Estate'.
- 2) Plantation lands whether they be State forest, timber reserves (subject to the *Forest Management Plan 2014-2013*, administered primarily through Parks and Wildlife) or Corporate Land (Parks and Wildlife).

All other harvest or disturbance operations that occur outside of the above land types are not the subject of this document.

Processes to ensure FPC operations do not negatively affect Noongar cultural and heritage values

The FPC routinely undertakes heritage site checks through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs register before any new major disturbance operations.

The FPC also recognises that not all Aboriginal Sites are registered and also commits to searching the Department of Aboriginal Affairs's 'Other Heritage Places' register.

The FPC recognises that the State Government's Aboriginal Heritage Due Diligence Guidelines provide a guide to processes required to ensure Noongar heritage values are protected during native forest operations. For activities that are considered to meet the Due Diligence Guidelines definition of minimal disturbance, Aboriginal Heritage Register site checks are required and also direct engagement with registered claim groups may be required to ensure the protection of Noongar cultural heritage and values. The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) will be the first point of contact when seeking to consult or work with registered claim groups. SWALSC will then help facilitate direct contact with the relevant registered claim groups, thereby ensuring the right people for country are able to be consulted in regards to heritage and cultural matters.

For further information about this document please phone the Communications Coordinator at FPC Kensington office on 9363 4600, or email info@fpc.wa.gov.au.

The FPC will express commitment by:

- Updating periodically and applying the guidelines and procedures adopted by FPC for identifying, conserving, and protecting Noongar cultural and heritage values.
- Ensuring that senior managers within FPC are supportive of this document, and that a number of key staff have responsibilities that cover engagement with Noongar people and protection of heritage values.
- Periodically liaising with relevant Parks and Wildlife, SWALSC staff, as well as registered claim groups in relation to this document.
- Referring to guideline documents such as the Aboriginal Heritage Due Diligence Guidelines.
- Pursuing opportunities for cultural awareness training amongst FPC staff and contractors.
- Investigating opportunities for the employment of Noongar people.
- Review workforce strategies available to support opportunities for the employment of Noongar people.

This document has been prepared in consultation with:



Department of
Parks and Wildlife



This document has been endorsed by the following working parties:

- South West Boojarah
- Gnaala Karla Booja
- Wagyl Kaip
- Whadjuk

