

# MEDIA RELEASE

To: News Editor  
From: Uniting Church Western Australia  
Maggie Johns 0419 831 576



Tuesday, 11 September 2018

## South West Forests Need Protection

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Synod of the Uniting Church Western Australia, held over the weekend, called on the State Government to place high conservation value forests in secure national parks for the survival of threatened species.

The Uniting Church has a long held concern for the environment alongside its strong social justice stances arising out of its Christian belief that God, as the Creator of the universe, calls us into a special relationship with the creation – a relationship of mutuality and interdependence which seeks the reconciliation of all creation with God.

The Synod decided that given the uniqueness of the South-West forest ecosystems, the vulnerability of numerous threatened species endemic to the region, the relatively small areas of uncleared forests remaining and the need to mitigate against further damage to the climate system, the remaining South-West forests need to be protected from logging activities.

As a result, the Synod will advocate for the WA Government to invest in and incentivise plantation timbers (on already cleared land only), farm forestry, tourism, recreation and other alternative industries for the South-West as part of a call for a broader plan to transition WA away from native forest logging.

A parallel focus on the rights of workers and local communities currently engaged in native forest logging was also strongly stated, to ensure that any changes to the industry are properly and fairly planned, with close community consultation.

Rev Steve Francis, Moderator of the Uniting Church WA said, “We live in such a beautiful and truly unique corner of the world. The Karri and Jarrah forests of the South West currently being logged are majestic examples of God’s good creation that provide vital habitat to rare flora and fauna. We have a responsibility to ensure the remaining forests are protected for the sake of all the species within them.

“We also wish to advocate for the local workers, families and communities who are currently reliant on native forest logging as their fair treatment is a related social justice issue. Any move to protect native forests must ensure that workers and local communities connected to the native forestry industry are included in the design and implementation of a fair transition plan.”

The decision made by the Synod also includes a call to expand the Indigenous Ranger program throughout the state.

Rev Francis said, “We are very encouraged to see the State Government’s initial investment in the Indigenous Ranger program and wish to see significant increases to this project. The South West forest areas are Aboriginal lands of the Nyungar people which they have cared for and managed for tens of thousands of years. Any further land care therefore needs to be led or advised by the relevant traditional owners and implemented by local Aboriginal people wherever possible.”

***For media enquiries and interviews,  
please contact Media and Communications Manager, Maggie Johns on 0419 831 576.***

From Friday 7 to Sunday 9 September 2018, more than 150 Uniting Church members from around Western Australia came together to discuss issues of importance in the life of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Western Australia at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting. Synod includes members from the congregations and faith communities of the Presbytery of Western Australia; MLC; Penrhos College; PLC; Scotch College; St Stephen’s School; Tranby College; Wesley College; Trinity Residential College and Conference Centre; Good Samaritan Industries; Juniper; UnitingCare West; Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress WA Regional Committee and Beanangirng Kwuurt Institute.