

## Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill 2012

November 2012

On Monday 19 November 2012, the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill 2012* completed its passage through the Australian Parliament. The passing the Bill delivers on Labor's election commitment to criminalise the trade of illegally harvested timber in Australia.

The Bill brings Australian legislation in the area on par with the European Union and US in taking action to stop the trade of illegally logged timber.

According to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Joe Ludwig illegal logging costs around \$60 billion globally each year, and the trade in timber logged illegally overseas threatens Australian forestry jobs by undercutting the local product. Senator Ludwig said about nine per cent of the timber coming into Australia was illegally logged costing around \$400 million annually.

Many of Australia's neighbours such as Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia are facing significant challenges as illegal logging deprives the countries of tax revenue when the timber is exported. Further, the illegal logging has serious environmental and social impacts on the countries as the operations often are run by criminal networks.

### The Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill 2012

The government has engaged in extensive consultation with importers, processors, industry, retailers, conservation groups and Australia's trading partners to develop the Bill.

The legislation does not discriminate against timber and timber products based on country of origin; rather it makes it an offence to import illegally logged timber into the Australian market and to process timber in Australia that has been illegally harvested. Thus the Bill does not place requirements on exports and trading partner but only on Australian importers and processors.

The legislation makes it a criminal offence to import timber from illegal logging operations, with significant punitive repercussions for offenders including jail of up to 5 years, forfeiture of illegal timber and fines.

The Bill passed the House of Representatives in August and now only awaits royal assent.