

Media Release

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Community views on plantation forestry to be measured in West Australian survey

To better understand what residents of southwest Western Australia think about commercial plantations, the University of Melbourne and CRC for Forestry have mailed out a questionnaire this week.

Information gathered from the survey will help local and state governments, forest and agricultural industries to plan for the future.

Three thousand residents of Southwest, Great Southern and Esperance areas will be asked to share their views on different forms of commercial plantations.

The expansion of plantations has been a subject of debate in many rural communities, and this survey seeks to better understand how people perceive plantations and the reasons for these views.

“This survey will provide valuable information about the way residents really think and feel about changes in the landscape,” says lead researcher Dr Kathryn Williams.

“Public comment and media coverage can provide some insights into the ways people view plantation forestry. Decision makers also need systematic social research to help identify areas of concern and support for different land uses.”

The results of the survey will be made available to the whole community to assist future decision making.

Households have been randomly selected to participate in the survey from regions across Southwest Western Australia including Southwest, Great Southern and Esperance areas.

“Every response is really very important,” says Dr Williams.

“We want to hear back from every resident surveyed, so we can be confident that we have a fair representation of community views and attitudes.”

The survey is part of a larger social research programme about plantation forestry and communities, which is conducted by the CRC for Forestry and research partners The University of Melbourne, Australian National University, The University of Tasmania, and Southern Cross University.

Research in Western Australia includes analysis of attitudes towards plantation forestry, social and economic costs and benefits of different types of commercial forestry, and effective strategies for community engagement.

Further information about this programme can be accessed online at

<http://www.crcforestry.com.au/research/programme-four/communities/index.html>

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