

# Fighting for the Forests

A History of  
The Western Australian Forest  
Protest Movement  
1895-2001

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This thesis is presented for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University

2008

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Ron Chapman

## **Abstract**

This thesis complements and extends Hutton and Connors' research on forest protest contained in their study of the Australian environment movement. As the first comprehensive study of Western Australian forest protest the thesis analyses the protest movement's organisation, campaigns and strategies. Its central argument is that the contemporary Western Australian native forest protest movement established a network of urban and south-west activist groups which encouraged broad public support, and that a diversity of protest strategies focused public attention on forest issues and pressured the state government to change its forest policies.

The thesis identifies two distinct periods of protest activity in Western Australia. During a first period of protest from the 1890s, conservationists used non-confrontational strategies to campaign for the protection of areas of native bushland, and the formation of Western Australia's first nature conservation groups in the early twentieth century laid the foundations for a contemporary forest protest movement. A second period of protest from the mid-1950s comprised five evolutionary phases of growth specific to Western Australia: a formative phase from the mid-1950s until the late 1960s when conservation groups combined to save areas of urban bushland; a transitional phase in the 1970s when forest activists adopted more assertive forms of protest; a collaborative phase during the early 1980s when the protest movement achieved some success through exploiting a political alliance with the state ALP; an expansionary phase in the late 1980s with the spread of forest protest groups in the state's south-west; and a final confrontational phase throughout the 1990s

when frustration at state government inactivity over forest protection resulted in an intensive forest campaign which employed both non-confrontational and direct action strategies.

The Western Australian forest protest movement was characterised by its ability to continually adapt its organisation and strategies to changing social and political conditions. This flexible approach to protest not only led to victories in the Shannon River Basin, Lane-Poole Jarrah Reserve and old growth forest campaigns, but also transformed forest protest into an influential social movement which contributed to the downfall of the Court Liberal Government in 2001.

## Acknowledgments

I wish to thank in particular Dr Beth Schultz of the Conservation Council of Western Australia for sharing with me her valuable recollections of over 30 years of forest protest in Western Australia and for allowing me access to both the Conservation Council's and her own extensive archives.

I would like to thank the staff of the State Records Office of Western Australia and the Battye Library of West Australian History for their help during the research for my thesis. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Grant Stone for providing access to archival material stored at the Murdoch University Library.

Especially, I wish to thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Lenore Layman, for her guidance and encouragement.

Finally, I offer my sincere thanks to all those members of the Western Australian forest protest movement who readily allowed me access to their private archives and agreed to participate as interviewees.

## **Table of Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Maps</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction and Literature Review</b>	
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>An Emerging Protest Movement</b>	
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>The 1950s and 1960s: A New Movement Forms</b>	
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>The 1970s: A Time of Transition</b>	
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>The Early 1980s: Negotiation and Collaboration</b>	
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>The Late 1980s: An Expanding Movement</b>	
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>The Early 1990s: Protest Escalation</b>	
<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>338</b>
<b>The Late 1990s: A Triumphant Movement</b>	
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>414</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>424</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>426</b>

## List of Figures

Figure		Page
2.1	Jarrahdale Timber Mill c.1890. Source: Jarrahdale Heritage Society, Weedon Collection.	35
2.2	Timber workers at Jarrahdale c.1890. Source: Jarrahdale Heritage Society, Weedon Collection.	35
3.1	Mrs Bessie Rischbieth. Source: <i>Daily News</i> , 21 April 1964.	74
3.2	Shirley Strickland, Vincent Serventy and Bessie Rischbieth meet together in 1959. Source: Battye Library (State Library of Western Australia).	77
4.1	John Chester twenty years after the Bunbury bombing. Source: <i>West Australian</i> , 20 December 1996.	124
4.2	Wagerup protesters gather outside Yarloop courthouse. Source: <i>Daily News</i> , 6 February 1979.	138
4.3	Poster advertising second Wagerup occupation. Source: Mahon archive, Battye Library (SLWA).	139

Figure		Page
4.4	Anti-bauxite mining protesters at the second Wagerup occupation.  Source: <i>West Australian</i> , 29 May 1979.	140
6.1	Peter Dowding receives the Tree Charter from participants in the Great Walk.  Source: <i>West Australian</i> , 15 April 1988.	264
7.1	Robert Daubney celebrates the lifting of the blockade on his dairy farm with a glass of milk.  Source: <i>West Australian</i> , 8 February 1995.	319
7.2	Perth people march along Barrack Street to protest against logging Western Australia' old growth forests.  Source: <i>West Australian</i> , 20 February 1995.	328
8.1	Luc Longley and forest protesters at Giblett block.  Source: <i>Manjimup-Bridgetown Times</i> , 3 September 1997.	350
8.2	Poster advertising Giblett forest rescue video and slide nights.  Source: Conservation Council archives.	354
8.3	West Coast Eagles coach Mick Malthouse admires a karri tree in the forest near Northcliffe.  Source: <i>West Australian</i> , 4 June 1998.	367



Figure		Page
8.4	Wattle block forest protest. Source: <i>Sunday Times</i> , 29 November 1998.	387
8.5	Forest protesters survey the damage to their camp at Wattle forest block near Manjimup. Source: <i>West Australian</i> , 23 August 1999.	390
8.6	Forest protesters in Perth's Plaza Arcade. Source: <i>West Australian</i> , 11 December 1999.	395

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The quality of photographs reproduced in this thesis varies considerably. While the best quality images have been obtained, it has not been financially possible to acquire copies of originals from newspapers and other collections.

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## List of Maps

Map		Page
2.1	Western Australia - areas of significance discussed in Chapter 2.	30
3.1	Western Australia - areas of significance discussed in Chapter 3.	67
4.1	Western Australia - areas of significance discussed in Chapter 4.	97
5.1	Western Australia - areas of significance discussed in Chapter 5.	148
5.2	Location of proposed jarrah reserve. <i>Source: Jarrah Reserve: A Proposal for a major reserve in the Northern Jarrah Forest of Western Australia, Conservation Council of Western Australia (Inc.), 1980, p.18.</i>	199
6.1	Western Australia - areas of significance discussed in Chapter 6.	218
6.2	Location of the wood chip licence area in the south-west of Western Australia. <i>Source: A. and J. Conacher, Environmental Planning and Management in Australia, OUP, 2000, p.20.</i>	231

Map		Page
7.1	Western Australia - areas of significance discussed in Chapter 7.	271
7.2	Sites of forest protest action around Northcliffe during the 1990s.  Source: Patricia Crawford and Ian Crawford: <i>Contested Country: A History of the Northcliffe Area of Western Australia</i> , UWA Press, 2003, p.197.	316
8.1	Western Australia - areas of significance discussed in Chapter 8.	338
8.2	Regional Forest Agreement boundary.  Source: <i>Towards a Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West Forest Region of Western Australia</i> , Joint RFA Steering Committee, 1998, p.57.	364

## Abbreviations

ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
ALCOA	Aluminium Company of America
ALP	Australian Labor Party
BES	Blackwood Environment Society
BGFF	Bridgetown-Greenbushes Friends of the Forest
CALM	Department of Conservation and Land Management
CDE	Coalition for Denmark's Environment
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CSNF (WA)	Campaign to Save Native Forests (Western Australia)
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
LCG	Leeuwin Conservation Group
RFA	Regional Forest Agreement
SFDF	South-West Forests Defence Foundation
TWS (WA)	Tasmanian Wilderness Society (Western Australia)
WACAP	WA Chip and Pulp Company
WAFA	Western Australian Forest Alliance