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### **New project sees Traditional Owners assess forest health**

A NOONGAR forest health assessment has been undertaken on two key areas of ecological thinning, with the results launched this week.

As part of a groundbreaking project by the South West Timber Hub, Traditional Owners were engaged to develop a framework for assessing Djarlma concepts and forest management.

Djarlma is a Noongar concept which reflects the interconnected relationship of people with forests and woodlands.

The report, Assessment of Noongar Cultural Values to Inform Forest Management, was launched this week at an event in Kirup, which included an on-country presentation by two of the Traditional Owners involved in the project.

South West Timber Hub Project Manager Wendy Perdon said the project was one she was particularly passionate about.

“This project is so important and engaging the Traditional Owners to assess forest health seems like such a logical step given the depth of their knowledge,” Mrs Perdon said.

“One of the interesting outcomes from this report, is the correlations between Noongar and industry perspectives.

“There are things we can learn and implement from the outcomes of this project, but, in many ways, industry is on the same track with a similar custodian approach to forest management.”

The report stated that all Elders involved were very clear that ecologically thinned forest was healthier than forest which had not been thinned.

One of the reasons for this was that thinned bush burns slower, is favourable for hunting and is similar traditional Noongar forest management, which was thinned mainly through the use of fire.

Anthropologist Myles Mitchell, Archae-Aus, was commissioned to undertake the project and engaged eight Traditional Owners to survey the two forest sites, both of which had been treated with different methods of ecological thinning.

Mr Mitchell said he had learned a lot from being involved, both from the Traditional Owners and from a forestry perspective.

“I must admit, I had some preconceived notions of forestry but this project helped to dispel those,” Mr Mitchell said.



“To me, the most important thing in this report is what the Elders have said.

“We can all learn from the concept of listening to country more broadly for the benefit of forest health.”

#### **Photos**

**Phillip Ugle Snr:** Traditional Owner Phillip Ugle Senior, explaining cultural indicators used during to assess forest health.

**Ian Telfer, Sen Louise Pratt, Gail Wynne, Wendy Perdon:** Forest Industries Federation of WA Chair Ian Telfer (left), Senator Louise Pratt, Traditional Owner Gail Wynne and South West Timber Hub Project Manager Wendy Perdon at this week’s report launch in Kirup.

**Noongar Forest Health Launch:** Traditional Owners Phillip Ugle Senior and Gail Wynne explaining the importance of large trees, such as this majestic jarrah tree, to the group who attended this week’s forest health report launch at the Munro Ecological Thinning Demonstration Site.

#### **Media enquiries**

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