Furphy

We need carbon credits to end native forest logging.

Fact

Carbon credits are problematic. We can end native forest logging without them.

Generating income from carbon credits should not be used in the transition away from native forest logging, for several reasons.

Carbon credits enable greenhouse gas polluters to meet their emission reduction obligations by buying carbon credits generated elsewhere. Instead of reducing their own emissions, industrial polluters in Australia that burn fossil fuels can "offset" them with carbon credits from projects that avoid emissions or soak up carbon in trees, soils or geological formations (Macintosh et al. 2023).

However, soaking up and storing carbon in forests is not equivalent to releasing carbon from fossil fuels. The carbon in forests and soils is part of the active carbon cycle, in which carbon is exchanged between the atmosphere, the land and the oceans. In contrast, burning fossil fuels emits carbon that has been stored below the Earth's surface for millions of years and injects it into the active carbon cycle (Steffen et al. 2016). Stopping native forest logging is no substitute for and should not be used to delay phasing out the burning of fossil fuels (Dooley 2024; Morgan 2023; Steffen et al. 2016). We need both to protect and restore forests and to stop emitting fossil carbon.

The integrity of carbon credits in Australia is highly questionable. Independent researchers have shown that most of the projects registered for carbon credits are unlikely to have delivered the carbon abatement benefits that were claimed, and that there are governance failures in the system that regulates carbon credits (Macintosh et al. 2023).

A method for generating carbon credits associated with native forestry is currently being considered by the Australian government. There are serious concerns from the Australia Institute and environment groups that if implemented, this method will actually facilitate ongoing logging of native forests (Young & Minshull 2024). In the meantime, waiting for carbon credits justifies logging as usual (Long 2024).

Importantly, a transition away from native forest logging can be done without carbon credits. Neither Victoria nor Western Australia have relied on carbon credits in their recent transition plans. New South Wales greatly expanded its national parks estate at the turn of the last century and New Zealand ended native forest logging on public lands without market mechanisms (Bakonyi 2023).

FURTHER READING

Bakonyi, A. (2023). *No credit required: Four examples of successful forestry transitions without market mechanisms*. The Australia Institute, November. Available at: https://australiainstitute.org.au.

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Macintosh, A. & Butler, D. (2023). 'The unsafe Safeguard Mechanism: how carbon credits could blow up Australia's main climate policy', *The Conversation*, 10 November. Available at: https://theconversation.com.

Morgan, W. (2023). 'A tonne of fossil carbon isn't the same as a tonne of new trees: why offsets can't save us', *The Conversation*, 10 March. Available at: https://theconversation.com.