

ABC Interview Friday June 25, 2021

ABC 720 Perth's Christine Layton interviews the director of Cry of the Forests, Jane Hammond

Christine Layton ([00:00](#)):

A new documentary made here in our south west is attracting quite a bit of attention. It's called Cry of the Forests and has joined this year's Revelation Film Festival lineup starting next week. Here's a bit of the trailer.

Speaker 2 ([00:12](#)):

Western Australia's Southwest forests grow nowhere else on the planet. Yet they are being cut down at a rate of 10 football fields every single day.

Speaker 3 ([00:28](#)):

We're actually destroying the life giver to the country.

Speaker 4 ([00:35](#)):

We must realize there's so many threats to the forest, it's not just one thing anymore, it's sort of under assault.

Speaker 5 ([00:49](#)):

The forests are a major ally in our efforts to avert catastrophic climate change.

Speaker 6 ([00:55](#)):

It's very hard to see any case for continued native forest logging.

Speaker 7 ([01:01](#)):

The Forest Products Commission was given that forest for nothing and yet they cannot cut down a tree and sell it for more than what it costs to cut it down.

Christine Layton ([01:11](#)):

States Southwest forests are part of one of the most bio-diverse regions on the planet. The Cry of the Forest exposes viewers to the reality we subject our forests to. You see firsthand the beauty of these towering ecosystems and the life they support and then you see them coming down. Freemantle based director Jane Hammond joins me to tell you, well, she's here to tell you about her new documentary. Thanks for coming in, Jane.

Jane Hammond ([01:38](#)):

Yeah. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about this really important environmental issue.

Christine Layton ([01:42](#)):

Can you give the listeners a sense of why you made this documentary?

Jane Hammond ([01:47](#)):

Yeah, I think I love the forest basically. And I started campaigning and becoming an environmental activist at the age of 14, because they were wood chipping our forests. Now many, many years later the Gallop government brought in legislation that I thought had protected our forests. And I've been involved in other things, but I discovered in 2019 that this was ongoing and that the damage to our forests had continued virtually unabated. And here in a climate emergency, when the forest offers so much protection from emissions, they can draw down and store heaps of carbon, we were cutting them down or turning them into wood chips, charcoal, and firewood. And that just seems such a waste.

Christine Layton ([02:42](#)):

What did you discover in 2019 that changed things for you?

Jane Hammond ([02:48](#)):

The Forest Alliance brought me in to do some preliminary celebrity interviews with people like John Butler, Luc Longley, Sabrina Hahn and we started making those to talk about forest, being this incredible technology, the best technology we have on earth for mitigating climate. And then I met Isaac and Wayne Webb when I was doing these celebrity interviews, who are the local custodians. And I spent a couple of hours with them near Margaret River in the Karri forest and they absolutely blew me away. And I learned about things that I was ashamed I didn't know. I didn't know the degree of connectivity that still existed with the people of the Southwest.

And so I thought this is an amazing film. We've got something here. People need to know this. I've been living in Perth most of my life. I've been visiting these beautiful forests. I'm in love with these forests and they're being destroyed and yet this cultural connection is so strong.

Christine Layton ([03:51](#)):

Can you give us some insights into what you learned?

Jane Hammond ([03:55](#)):

Well, just that. That there is this strong connection, and that continues. And we see in the film, just some glimpses of how important these forests are to the people who are the traditional custodians, the Wadandi Pibulmun people. And the way that it was expressed was just so beautiful. I thought how did I not know this and how can I tell this story so that more people know that, not only are we losing our environmental heritage, but we're also losing our cultural heritage.

Christine Layton ([04:33](#)):

Where does this take place? The documentary, tell us about some of the sites.

Jane Hammond ([04:38](#)):

Right, there was a lot of shooting around between Nannup and Margaret River in the Jarrah forest around Helms Block and also around Pemberton around the Trenbrook forest area where we witnessed the huge logging machines, like great big monsters just coming in and chewing up the forest in the rain. So, it was quite devastating to watch.

Christine Layton ([05:08](#)):

I have watched the documentary and I'll say that I have never felt such a connection to a tree because when you watch it being taken by the claw of the machinery, ripped out of the ground, you can hear it. It's visceral and it did make me think of things differently. And I did not realize the scale of which this is happening right now in our own backyards.

It's a quarter to three, we're talking about Cry of the Forests, Jane Hammond is my guest in the studio.

So you get some unbelievable access. How did you go about getting to work with these activists so closely? Tell me about that.

Jane Hammond ([05:50](#)):

When I started shooting, I met a couple of people that were really keen to document what they were seeing. People who were really deeply connected to the forest in Ray Swartz and Nathan Hammer. And they were going out watching the forest fall and they said: "look how can we document this? What cameras can we use?" And I suggest to them, let's look at the GoPro's. They're cheap, they're easy, they're very steady.

So they both armed themselves with GoPro's and they did the most incredible footage. Both of them have the ability and others as well, there's a whole crew who were doing this off their own back bearing witness, but they have the ability to hide in the forest. You can walk straight past them, you don't see them, but they're right there. So they're Bush people, they understand the forest, they know how to work it. And they were there following these loggers and getting up close and personal, to the point where I was constantly concerned and saying, we've got enough, we've got enough. Please don't take any undue risks. But they are very aware of the way trees fall and this sort of thing. So they got this incredible footage.

Christine Layton ([07:06](#)):

The text line is 0437922720. Jody said if they were being cut down at a rate of 10 football fields per day, there would be absolutely no forest left. So somebody somewhere is fudging figures to be dramatic. What's your response to that, Jane?

Jane Hammond ([07:22](#)):

Those figures are the logging industry's own figures. They literally are clearing that rate of forest. They say 1%, but that's 7,000 hectares-

Christine Layton ([07:32](#)):

Is that in WA, Australia or the world?

Jane Hammond ([07:34](#)):

It's Western Australia. In our Southwest, because Alcoa itself takes a huge swathe of forest, and they literally clear it to dig up the minerals to get bauxite. And you could see in the film, some of the evidence of the burning piles of wind rows that are left crackling away on the bare earth. And we're seeing this time and time again. So yeah, it sounds incredible, but this is happening. This is not the Amazon forest, this is in our own back yard.

Christine Layton ([08:07](#)):

I should mention at this point we did reach out to Alcoa to invite them on, to respond and they declined to comment on the film. They do feature. Some people out there might say that industry is a necessary ingredient of our economy. And what do you say to those people, Jane?

Jane Hammond ([08:26](#)):

Well, absolutely, but we don't need to dig up the only Jarrah forest in the world to get a very common mineral, which is bauxite, which makes alumina. And we've actually got a world glut of that at the moment, but Alcoa wants to expand even further into our forest to take even more. And people who are living around Jarrahdale and Dwellingup, their lives are being directly impacted. Not to mention so many of us that go and picnic in those areas, that bush walk in those areas close to Perth. We've got this amazing environment and we love it. Perth people love their forests.

And they are worth so much more standing than being cleared for the bauxite that underlies them, and cleared to make charcoal and wood chips and firewood.

Christine Layton ([09:15](#)):

It's nearly 10 minutes to three on ABC Radio Perth. My guest is Jane Hammond. We're talking about Cry of the Forests. Somebody said what is the timber being used for and you mentioned that some of it is wood chips.

Jane Hammond ([09:27](#)):

Some of it is charcoal, which goes to make silicon. So they take huge amounts of Jarrah forest and they literally turn it into charcoal to make the carbon, to make silicon from melting down quartz rocks that they mine near Moora. And then they fill the furnace with the rest of the wood chips that they make from taking our forest. So it just seems like such a waste to turn a beautiful forest into an industrial bit of carbon.

Christine Layton ([10:04](#)):

I'm sure you've looked into this. Are they, Alcoa for example, planting any trees to replace what they've taken?

Jane Hammond ([10:11](#)):

Yes, they plant trees and initially when they started this, they were just putting blue gums in straight lines. Alcoa, to its credit, thanks to the community pressure have done a better job. But still, when you look at their re-vegetated areas, they don't look like forest. And you take out the bauxite, which acts as this massive sponge for water retention. You take that out of the system and the Jarrah forest will not grow back in this way that it was before, because it's missing an essential ingredient that has made it healthy and made it thrive.

Christine Layton ([10:47](#)):

We're going to come back to, I want to talk about the public survey that is out for comment. We're going to mention that at the end. Don't let me forget. Look, there's a lot of attention being given to the Southwest forest. I want to talk about its beauty for just a moment, because some of the footage is just outstanding. What was it like to be there to be filming, to see it up close? What was it like?

Jane Hammond ([11:09](#)):

Fantastic. I mean, it is one of the reasons I made this film too, was I wanted to remind people how much they love the forest. I wanted them to fall in love with the forest once again, because that's exactly what I did when I was shooting. And you just see that and you smell it and you feel it. Like get out there in the forest, go for a walk. Remember what we have. Don't just drive through, open your windows and suck in the air. Get out of the car and experience this beauty while we still have it.

Christine Layton ([11:41](#)):

And see the wildlife that's out there.

Jane Hammond ([11:43](#)):

Yeah, see the wildlife, hear the cockatoos, the beautiful cockatoos who'd come in. In the film, they come in while people are being arrested, a huge flock, like they were watching us the whole time.

Christine Layton ([11:55](#)):

It's interesting. I'm getting lots of texts now. 0437922720. Robin in Wanneroo says Cry of the Forests is great. The worst thing is that the Forest Products Commission is making a financial loss from this destruction. Did you want to respond to that one? Jane?

Jane Hammond ([12:10](#)):

Absolutely. I mean, it's interesting that people take different things from this film and the one thing that they cannot get past is the fact that we don't make any money from this. So why are we doing this? It's a question that the government can't actually answer.

Christine Layton ([12:26](#)):

Jack says, conversely Cry of the Forests is an outright one sided piece. Our Jarrah forest has only ever been selectively logged, is not used for wood chips because it is unsuitable timber and is logged in a sustainable renewable way at less than 1% per year. What do you say to Jack?

Jane Hammond ([12:43](#)):

Ooh, there's a couple of things there. First of all, it is used for wood chips. I've seen the wood chip piles myself. That's what fuels the furnaces at Simcoa. It's not being used, it's not being sent in the same way that the Karri forest is going overseas for wood chips, but it is used in the furnaces. And I've got footage of grandmothers climbing those massive piles of wood chips in a separate film I did called .. I can't remember what it's called, but it's a three minuter on Simcoa, which is the silicon manufacturing plant near Bunbury.

And when you talk about 1%, that's 7,000 hectares. 7,000 hectares of forest that we can't afford to lose. And over 10 years, that's 10% of what remains of our forest is going.

Christine Layton ([13:35](#)):

This text says, take a look at the forest regrowth on Nettleton Road, Jarrahdale. Better than the original. Do you know that area, Jane?

Jane Hammond ([13:44](#)):

No, I can't say I know the streets, piece by piece, but if you go along, I think it's Brookton Highway, anyway one of the major highways out of the city, you have a sign that appears in the film and it says, this is a hundred years of re-growth. And I'm thinking, oh my goodness, I could wrap two hands around the trunks of those trees and that's a hundred years and you're telling me that's re-growth? That's like spindly little trees. So, I don't know what defines better. I think a natural forest is what's better for the environment, what's better for the creatures that live in it than trees in a straight line or whatever they've got.

Christine Layton ([14:24](#)):

You've fielded a lot of questions from people who have watched the documentary. What are some of those questions been?

Jane Hammond ([14:32](#)):

The first question people ask is why are we doing that? Why would we be doing that? They're flabbergasted as am I. And the question is actually not able to be answered, because it makes no economic sense. It makes no environmental sense. It makes no sense in a climate emergency. So at one point there is a suggestion that the government simply forgot about this industry, that it's a legacy industry. But most of our timber now comes from plantations. So that's the area that we need to be concentrating on. Let's get out of our native forests. Let's let them recover. Let's protect them for climate, biodiversity, mountain bike riding, ecotourism, beekeeping, all those other industries that we can make money on, but let's leave them intact. Let's leave them for rainfall and for climate.

Christine Layton ([15:24](#)):

Peter in Manjimup said the Treenbrook state forest was felled in the 1920s, forests grow back. Your response?

Jane Hammond ([15:34](#)):

Yeah, forests do grow back, but have we got time? Have we got another a hundred years in a climate emergency when forests are so good at storing carbon? And yet we're chopping them down and making them release carbon. That makes no sense in this current situation that we're in.

Christine Layton ([15:50](#)):

AyJay has said, another one sided story. Typical ABC. I did reach out to Alcoa to get them to comment, might I add? And I'm putting texts from both sides to Jane. If you want to give me another perspective, if you are someone who works in the industry and you have something to say, you can give me a call, 1300222720. I am open to hearing it. Justin from Alfred Cove said the amount of subsidized electricity that Alcoa uses to produce aluminum is massive. Another reason to protect our Jarrah forest.

So look, there are perspectives on both sides. I know that the film isn't without its critics. So what do you say to those who feel it's not representative of the state of forestry in WA?

Jane Hammond ([16:36](#)):

Yeah, it's very much a social impact documentary. It's not current affairs. So it's not something you'd see on the ABC, which would give both sides of the argument, because I took a deliberate sort of direction to give voice to the people you never hear, to the people who are living near and around the forest, to the cultural custodians, to the people who care about climate, to the wildlife carers. And giving them a voice because the Forest Products Commission puts out a plethora of taxpayer funded videos on it's YouTube channel that never has another voice. It only has one voice. So here's a little bit of a balance.

But also if I'm making a film on climate change, I'm not going to talk to the climate deniers because these people have had enough say. They've done enough damage and we made this film in a hurry because we are in a climate emergency.

Christine Layton ([17:38](#)):

We do need to give less air time to climate deniers, I agree with that. One caller said, they've worked for this mine for three quarters of their life and it's put food on the table for his nine children. He felt that the documentary fails to account for the replanting in the forests. So that's from one person.

Look, let's talk about the WA government has announced they want to hear from the public. Here you go people, they want to hear from the public and industry ahead of a formal process to update its next forest management plan, 2024-33. The survey is now open. It's going to close on Sunday the 1st of August. It can be accessed at a URL that is very long, but I can give you if you text me. What do you think about this, Jane?

Jane Hammond ([18:21](#)):

This is absolutely fantastic that the government is listening. Finally, it's listening and here we have this new and quite brilliant environment minister who maybe can make some real change, can actually protect our forests and can protect our climate and can ensure that humanity survives in its own small way, instead of just destroying everything, it has that chance. So please get online, whatever your opinions are, let the government know what those are.

Christine Layton ([18:51](#)):

T from Yokine said, Jesus, all these folks defending large corporations that destroy forests. What the heck? Big ups to this filmmaker. And Inger in Leschenault said, are you holding a screening in Bunbury or Busselton please? We do have a statewide audience right now.

Jane Hammond ([19:06](#)):

Absolutely, there are plans to screen it very soon in Bunbury. Anyone can host a screening of this film via Fan Force. So it's online and you just jump online and make a booking. So it's open for that.

Christine Layton ([19:18](#)):

All right, wonderful. Well, thank you for coming on to talk about this subject, Jane. Thank you to everyone who has shared their views, 0437922720. So it's on at Revelation Film Festival next week?

Jane Hammond ([19:33](#)):

Absolutely, four o'clock next Friday and then again, Saturday at 10. O'clock, the following Saturday at the Backlot at 4:30 and Sunday, the 11th back at the Luna at 10:00 AM.

This transcript was exported on Jun 29, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Christine Layton ([19:46](#)):

Very good. Thank you for coming in Jane. That's Jane Hammond, director of Cry of the Forests. So you can say that at Revelation Film Festival, but also Fan Force if you do want to hold a screening and if you want that link for the government survey, send me a text.