
From: barrie@cycletrek.com.au on behalf of Barrie and Sherry Thomas
<barrie.sherry@cycletrek.com.au>
Sent: Friday, 13 January 2017 4:27 PM
To: KENS-373-ForestInfo
Subject: Submission re the RFA progress report

WA Regional Forest Agreement

Project Officer, Office of the Director
Forest and Ecosystem Management
Department of Parks and Wildlife
Locked Bag 104
Bentley Delivery Centre, Western Australia, 6983

Dear Sir

Over the years since the RFA was originally implemented, the forest industry has undergone considerable change and I believe there is no longer a viable industry in NATIVE timber in WA in its current format. The reasons for the changes are numerous and include:

- Construction industry has moved to plantation timber
- Excessive extraction of timber prior to the RFA has meant there is insufficient remaining resource
- Timber regrowth rates are well below expectations, partly due to poor practices in forest management and also due to climate change

It is now time to transition out of the current native timber industry to one where the only extraction is for a high end product for the building, furniture and craft industries with a royalty to reflect its high value.

After claiming its importance to employment in WA, following the RFA the native timber industry went the way of plantation logging and began using machines instead of men; therefore dumping a large number of fallers contrary to their stated position during the RFA negotiations. There are now very few regional jobs in the native timber industry. In 2016, forestry, logging and support services provided 0.1% of WA jobs. Employment attributed by the FPC to native forests was 18-21% of total forestry employment. The SW forests employ between 170 and 330 people in logging, forestry and support services. There are further jobs in sawmills processing FPC native sawlogs, estimated here at 130. (Swann, T & Browne, B (2016) Barking up the Wrong Trees, Australia Institute).

Further, the recovery rates by WA mills has declined in a period where improved technology should have seen an increase in recovery in quality jarrah sawlogs - now becoming an increasingly scarce resource as yield per hectare declines. FPC's annual reports from 2002 to 2016 shows a major decline in higher value sawlogs from 51% of the native forest production to just 12%. Recovery rates at mill have dropped from 26% in 2005 to 20% in 2013.

Wastage of jarrah (which could make up part of the Simcoa supply) left on the forest floor after a logging operation is excessive and a serious misuse of the resource and shows poor management practices. However, careful recovery of some of this in the transition years, managed so as to cause minor further forest disturbance, could make for a viable short-mid term small business opportunity. Simcoa contracts should not be renewed. No other silicone factory in the world uses or needs jarrah to feed its production. Neither does Simcoa.

Forest health and contractor hygiene compliance has been poorly managed. It is invariably left as an 'honor' system for contractors to maintain correct procedures and this is constantly breached adding to the spread of dieback, marri canker and other forest diseases. Even when evidence of breaches is provided by the public, there is little or no follow up and no penalties to perpetrators.

It has been widely reported and recent studies show that the native timber industry is operating at a financial loss. The native forestry division has benefited from the government support to the FPC. Despite this, it has seen profits decline to low levels over the past decade, and net losses over the last four years totaling \$34 million. The taxpayer has been subsidising the native timber industry now for an extended period of time and the community tolerance for this has diminished, particularly now in a time of economic stress for the state.

The WA RFA has outlived its usefulness as it is based on outdated assumptions. Planning for a transition out of the current model of a native timber industry must begin immediately to one where the only extraction is for a high end product for the building, furniture and craft industries. The government funding currently propping it up can instead be used for this transition. Land cleared for mining will supply a small ongoing native timber resource. Plantation timber production needs to be increased. Alternative uses for our forests are readily found including tourism (particularly considering the rapid increase in demand for eco-tourism opportunities); nature play and adventure sports not only for tourism, but also for improved health of local communities; honey production; seed collection for the nursery industry; wildflower collection plus the obvious advantage of carbon sequestration in a standing forest at a time when this is desperately needed.

Yours sincerely

Sherry Thomas

Barrie & Sherry Thomas



Cycletrek
at Kamarang
416 Lowden-Grimwade Rd
Lowden WA 6240

Barrie Phone: 0427 214 217
Sherry Phone: 0447 337 117
Email: ride@cycletrek.com.au
www.cycletrek.com.au