

NSW Regional Forest Agreements  
Forestry Branch  
Environmental Protection Authority  
PO Box A 290  
Sydney South NSW 1232

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**RE: Submission on NSW Regional Forest Agreements Second & Third Five-Yearly Review**

This submission is based on my own observation and experience over more than 20 years, both as a Timber Industry participant in the Upper North East RFA Region of NSW, and as a community member with a particular interest in investment attraction and job creation for the region

The native forest-based timber industry in the region is sawlog based and at the same time diverse. Participants have largely identified their own niche within it.

HURFORDS – A “VALUE-ADDED” TIMBER COMPANY

Hurfords are not “commodity” Sawmillers!!!

Security of Hurfords investment is dependent on the continued supply of a critical mass of the high quality sawlogs of species for which we have encouraged and developed markets.

The Government financial incentives provided at the time of the RFA enabled us to expand our small manufacturing plant and premises to add value to the features of appearance and durability of our unique coastal hardwood timber species.

That financial grant was applied to the establishment of our drymill in a former brewery building outside Lismore, NSW. Investment in technology and plant at this site has continued to the present.

As a result of our ongoing significant investment in research and development, we have been able to produce timber products that are sought after by developers of large public projects. I doubt that a museum or gallery building or renovation project in recent years has been completed without the inclusion of Hurford timber products.

e.g. World Heritage listed Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne: Worldwide, this is the only 19th century Great Hall to survive largely intact, still in its original landscape. Originally constructed in 1879, the building had an imported baltic pine floor. Permission was sought to replace this with concrete, but this was declined on heritage grounds. It was agreed that spotted gum hardwood would be better able to withstand the weight of modern display requirements. The 6 x 1½ inch Spotted Gum flooring in the profile of the original pine was supplied by Hurford Hardwood.

## PLANTATIONS & PRIVATE NATIVE FORESTRY

Our family Company, Hurford Forests, was Australian Forest Growers' NSW Tree Farmer of the Year 2010.

After WW2 James Hurford, a local builder and the founder of our business, purchased a small country sawmill and 1,000 acres (450 ha) of forested land to provide timber which he had difficulty procuring for his houses. Today, this land is still owned and managed by us for quality sawlog production.

From this small beginning, we have become significant native timber producers and forest growers.

Today Hurford Forests manage over 4,000ha of native hardwood. Our forests continue to produce high quality hardwood timber products.

We embarked on a mission to show by example the plantation growth of high grade sawlogs. This began in 2003 with the purchase of property on the Mt Warning caldera and similar in climate and soil type to the man-made blackbutt forest established by the NSW Forestry Commission at Whian Whian from the 1930's. Our sawmill had received our best quality blackbutt sawlogs from Whian Whian SF over many years and we set out to replicate it. This process will eventually take 25-40 years.

The principal difference in the establishment of this "tree farm" and many of the plantations established by MIS companies is that it is intensively "farmed" incorporating species/ site matching, site preparation, thinning, pruning, etc. — e.g. after 12 years dominant blackbutt trees measured 36cm diameter and 36 m tall.

Family financial investment in this and ongoing investments in private native forestry is considerable and its outcome is dependent on continued critical mass of supply of sawlogs from the public estate.

## JOBS AND REGIONAL TOWNS:

The Timber Industry is a significant job provider in Regional NSW. There are many regional towns that would be decimated by the further loss of the "local timber industry"

Prior to the RFA, State Forests provided and maintained a number of "Forest Drives" in the Northern Rivers region (e.g. Cambridge Plateau, Whian Whian SFs). Pamphlets including maps and detailing points of interest were provided by State Forests and distributed through tourist offices and placed in lidded boxes at the beginning of the drive.

In 1998 there was wide distribution of a "letter" from NEFA regarding jobs and the timber industry, and that those lost would be readily replaced by jobs in tourism.

In fact, there was no reason why those activities could not have been further developed and jobs created without the curtailment of the timber industry.

Tourism Northern Rivers, of which I was a Director at the time, sought to achieve this. Extensive research into nature-based tourism including demographics of users and their preferred

accommodation types, transport, etc. was undertaken. A nature-based tourism investment brochure, backed by detailed recommendations for provision of accommodation, amenities, forest information, etc. was produced and printed in anticipation of the RFA outcome.

However, after the signing of the RFA, National Parks showed no interest in this work. In fact, Tourism NSW representatives were told that NP were unable to afford to maintain these forest roads and therefore they intended to close them.

Although plans and projected outcomes were thus curtailed, the expansion of forest related tourism in the region was pursued and interest from international investors identified --including being short listed for a 6 star low impact resort -- until 2003 with the further reservation of the forest estate in the area post RFA by the NSW Carr Government.

Today there are complaints from residents on the coastal fringe (e.g. Byron Bay and its hinterland) regarding the impact of tourist numbers, but the potential for our inland communities has not been realised.

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on the Report.

Yours sincerely

Lexie Hurford

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██████████ NSW, ██████