

Victor I.P. Eddy B.Sc. (For). MIFA.

5 Dr. Abramowski Court, Mildura 3500

(P.O. Box 394 Merbein 3505)

Ph.. 03 5025 2131 A.H. 03 50234795

Fax. 03 5025 2143 Mobile 0428 502035 e-mail vipe@merbeinsawmills.com.au

Submission to NSW Government Inquiry

**SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT WITH PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

This submission concerns opportunities to maximise carbon storage in forests and forest products being limited by regulation.

As a graduate forester I have had forty-one years experience of managing native forests plus some plantation. In recent years I have been involved with regional native vegetation planning under the Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997, and more recently as a member of the Private Native Forestry Working Group developing a Code of Practice for Private Native Forest Management.

Both natural forests and plantations can be managed as perpetual sources of timber. Timber and wood products are a renewable resource that stores carbon during its service life. Most alternatives to timber/wood are of mineral origin requiring significant emission of carbon to the atmosphere during manufacture and that store little or no carbon in service. Wood is fully biodegradable without toxic emissions or it can be used as heating fuel instead of fossil fuel.

Hence there are very strong arguments to favour the management of forests for the production of wood products. Such management should aim to optimise growth and maximise the volume of sound wood per hectare.

Plantation forestry involves substantial establishment costs. This favours short rotations from planting to harvest, which minimises opportunities for conservation of native biodiversity. These forests are as site demanding as any agricultural crop. By comparison natural native forest yields less product per hectare and provides an ecologically diverse habitat. Despite periodic harvesting, native forests are all too often taken out of production because their management has conserved species too well.

In nature a tree stores carbon by creating new woody tissue. The amount of carbon stored increases as the tree grows until a point where, due to age and injury, decay sets in. At some point in a tree's life the rate of decay exceeds the rate of growth. From that time on the tree emits more carbon than its new growth absorbs. Managing forests for timber production aims to minimise the decay phase by utilising the forest's products before the trees have reached the decay phase. At the same time the harvested wood is storing carbon "in-service".

The conservation movement or "green lobby" have a clear objective to maximise the perceived habitat value of all forests. Already some plantations and man made "native forests" have been placed off limits in conservation reserves because of their perceived habitat or high conservation value. The practical affect of these actions minimises the number of trees in the growing phase and maximises the number of trees in the over-mature decaying phase as these older trees are deemed to be the best "habitat".

In August this year the current Government gazetted a Regulation for the management of private native forests. This Regulation is based on Codes of Practice for each of the four productive forest regions of NSW.

These Codes of Practice will ensure that our private native forests do not achieve their productive and carbon storage potential in our lifetime!

The need for regulation is based on a perception that native forest management on private lands has been poor or non-existent. Thus inferring that much of the private native forest is in poor condition, both productively and ecologically. Yet the Codes of Practice are designed to maintain a good forest in good condition, not to rehabilitate a forest in poor condition.

Regardless of forest size the codes do not allow a degraded forest to be rehabilitated in less than 100 years. The codes require a mature tree cover to be retained over 80% of the forest area with no more than 20% regenerating at any time.

A significant proportion of private native forests are only small holdings. If they cannot be managed to practical advantage they will not be managed at all. This may neither conserve their natural ecology nor maximise their carbon storage capacity. In trying to upgrade larger forests the codes will inadvertently degrade a significant area of small holdings.

The four private native forest codes of practice are an interim measure to provide regulation for two years while a Private Native Forestry Act is drafted. Therefore this Government has two years in which they can act to ensure that these forests have maximum impact through carbon storage while at the same time being productive and biodiverse.

You have listened too long to the hard line conservation lobby. It is ten years since the Native Vegetation Conservation Act came into force and in that time the hard liners still have not started to realise that their approach has resulted in more poor management and less effective conservation than we had experienced in the previous 50 years!

Yours Faithfully

Victor I.P. Eddy