

# Baradine for sawmill med

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Date: 16 / 08 / 2019

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5 Apr

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News



 Cypress pine, one of the high-value timbers harvested in the Pilliga and at Baradine region. There's a rolling dispute between Baradine Sawmill and state government.



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State government has announced the Baradine Sawmill has ceased operations following failed mediation last week to resolve a dispute over timber contracts.



Both Baradine Sawmilling spokesman Ian Paul and Forestry Minister Paul Toole announced support for the affected workers was the main priority.

“While the decision to close the mill was made by the Baradine Sawmilling Company, we understand the impact it could have on a small community like Baradine, so we will continue to work with the company over coming weeks,” Mr Toole said.

The dispute is ongoing and further arbitration is expected.

Mr Paul said he was unable to go into specifics, but indicated the dispute was a continuation of longrunning fears over having to harvest increasingly younger trees to meet contracts with NSW Forestry Corporation.

Mr Toole said the best available evidence told government that timber supply in the Pilliga and Baradine region could support a sustainable industry in the long term. Talks with the Cypress Pine industry to identify further opportunities and growth are ongoing.

The Cypress industry underwent significant structural changes following the Brigalow Forest decision of 2006, including the rationalising of many smaller Cypress mills to fewer major operators.

Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries said he too was limited in what he could say about the Baradine closure, but indicated the decision was not unexpected.

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# WINEWS

## Sawmill owners fear Pilliga forest in NSW being destroyed by timber contract pressures

By environment reporter Jake Sturmer

Updated Sat 12 Sep 2015, 7:07am

**Sawmill owners in western New South Wales fear they are destroying the Pilliga forest in order to meet their timber contracts.**

They say they are being forced to harvest increasingly younger trees — including saplings of the bare minimum size — which they say will ultimately devastate the forest.

The Baradine Sawmill signed wood supply agreements 10 years ago with the New South Wales Forestry Corporation.

The Forestry Corporation allocates areas to be logged based on its estimates of the timber in the forests, but it is up to the sawmills and their logging contractors to find and harvest what is out there.

This year the Baradine Sawmill was given a quota of 20,000 cubic metres of logs.

The sawmill claims there is not enough decent quality timber in the areas it has been assigned to meet the quota.

Baradine Sawmill co-owner Michael Paul said something needed to be done "as a matter of urgency".

"There's smaller and smaller patches available and you have to move equipment about 20 times a year which is very costly and you're getting a smaller and smaller resource which is potentially taking away the future of the forest floor in the Pilliga," he said.

"For country towns, country areas you've got farming forestry and fishing and the main drivers of those economies so you need to keep it going."

The Baradine Sawmill employs 17 people and the its owners believe they will run out of suitable logs by Christmas.



**PHOTO:** Workers say this is one area in the Pilliga Forest that has been over logged.  
(ABC News: Jake Sturmer)



**PHOTO:** Paddy Paul inspecting timber at Baradine Sawmill. (ABC News: Jake Sturmer)



"It's a tough ask and the employees are very on edge about what's been happening to date," mill co-owner Paddy Paul said.

"[They're] very concerned ... [they've got] families, they've got mouths to feed, people to school."

The Paul family know what happens when things go wrong.

They said their Gunnedah sawmill ran out of quality timber and shut its doors in September last year, making 20 workers redundant.

Gunnedah Timbers and Forestry Corporation of NSW are currently engaged in a contractual dispute over that sawmill.

## Sawmill owners turn to unlikely allies

The sawmill's owners have turned to strange bedfellows for help — the Greens.

"When you talk to the operators [and] you talk to the mill owners, they're every bit as much a victim of this as the forest," Greens MP David Shoebridge said.

"Forests that shouldn't be logged any more than every 40 to 110 years are being logged every 10 or 15 years and there's nothing left.

"They know that this has destroyed the future, the financial future of their industry and they're quite desperate — they want someone to stand up and make sure that our forests have a future."



PHOTO: A logger in action in the Pilliga Forest. (ABC News: Jake Sturmer)

Paddy Paul said he considered himself a conservationist.

"We're more green than the Greens because we want to continually cut the forest and keep it healthy and thriving and keep it there continuously," he said.

The Greens and the sawmill's owners would like to see the Government buy out the wood supply agreement or alternatively, the Pauls' would like to see Conservation Areas and National Parks opened up to logging.

## Government maintains 'harvesting in NSW forests is sustainable'

The sawmill's owners met Minister for Primary Industries Niall Blair in June.

He offered an updated review of the timber in the Pilliga which was rejected by the Paul family.

"Nevertheless the offer remains," a spokeswoman for the minister said in a statement.

"Harvesting in western NSW forests is sustainable.



"The NSW Government has approvals in place to ensure the environment is protected and the forest is harvested in a way that promotes regeneration."



PHOTO: Logs being unloaded at Baradine Sawmill. (ABC News: Jake Sturmer)

Michael Paul said there was not enough time to get a review done before the mill ran out of suitable timber.

"There's been a lot of reviews already conducted," he said.

"The last one basically said that National Parks and Conservation Areas would have to be opened up as matter of urgency.

"That was a [State] Government commissioned report.

"We've had our own private reports done — I don't know how many reports you have to keep getting done."

The Natural Resources Commission released a report in December 2014 warning that "business-as-usual management" was "unlikely to deliver the best conservation outcomes" for western NSW forests.

It recommended parts be opened up to ecological thinning — selectively removing trees or dense vegetation to help the area ultimately grow.

While not explicitly recommending commercial harvesting, the report said thinning "may generate residues with a secondary commercial value".

The minister's spokeswoman said the timber resources were reviewed in 2010 and "current advice to the Government is that Forestry Corporation continues to sustainably meet its contractual obligations".

**Topics:** environmental-impact, forestry, state-parliament, pilliga-2388, gunnedah-2380, lismore-2480







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## **SUBMISSION REGIONAL FOREST ASSESSMENT SOUTH-WESTERN CYPRESS STATE FORESTS**

1<sup>st</sup> April, 2010

The Baradine Sawmill was acquired by the Paul family in 1994. It has a current wood supply agreement with the NSW Government ending in 2025 in the amount of 20,000m<sup>3</sup> per annum. The company has a staff of 17, plus 8 contractors providing logging and cartage operations. The company was the recipient of financial assistance under the BTIDDAF programme enabling the following capital works to be carried out..

1. Installation of an automatic sawbench to assist in processing smaller size logs.
2. Facilities and equipment to carry out all saw sharpening operations resulting in the employment of an apprentice. This procedure was previously outsourced to a Sydney firm.
3. Replaced the existing unreliable water supply.

During the current financial year Baradine Sawmill has extracted to date 4,000m<sup>3</sup> from the Gulargambone State Forest. A commercial thinning operation is currently being undertaken in Gilwarney State Forest (Gilgandra) with an estimated cut of 500m<sup>3</sup>. All other logging operations were conducted in the Pilliga.

Approximately 40% of Baradine production is exported with Chain of Custody Certification. That is that the timber must only have been extracted from certified sustainable forests. It is noted that Crown Leases and Western Land Leases do not satisfy that requirement. We have knowledge of logs sourced from Western Land leases and confirm that they are of a quality unacceptable for the Sydney/Melbourne flooring market and would certainly not be of export quality.

We understand that the result of the Inventory Assessment using Lidar technology indicates a sustainable supply based on a 150 year forecast, approximates to the log allocations of the 4 existing log supply agreements in NSW (Quirindi, Gunnedah, Baradine and Grants Sawmills).

The Gunnedah Forestry area will probably come under stress from the coal industry with Leard Forest unlikely to supply little if any millable timber in the future due to mining operations, while Doona State Forest (one of two of the fastest growing Cypress Forests



in NSW) is central to proposed major mining operations by BHP Billiton. Any future shortfall in log supply to the Gunnedah mill from these above mentioned forests can only be sourced from the Pilliga Forest. A potential reduction of access to the Gilgandra/Gulargambone State Forest that may result from the current regional forest assessment will only lead to an even heavier demand on the Pilliga, resulting in unsustainability of the whole resource.

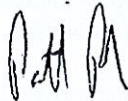
Questions have been raised on the viability of Western Forestry. We believe that a comparison with the operations of National Parks and Community Conservation Areas in the Western Division would prove that not only are State Forests better managed but on a cost per hectare basis would be considerably cheaper than that existing with National Parks and Community Conservation Areas.

Cypress requires a strict policy of thinning in order to maintain and increase growth. This is partly carried out by Forestry (25/30 year non commercial thinning) and by sawmills operating in accordance with the wood supply agreements (65 year commercial cut). Without such management the cypress forest will lock up presenting an impenetrable mass of thin stems three to four metres high with no ground cover, an ideal combination for potential soil erosion, and certainly not a habitat for birds or native animals. The National Parks and Community Conservation Areas have no policy of regular thinning and seem to rely on Hazard Reduction Burning as its management tool.

Mention has been made of the large number of forests, the subject of this regional forest assessment. We suggest you consider the numerous National Parks and Conservation Areas scattered over the Brigalow Belt South Bio Region and how difficult and costly it must be to manage so many areas covering the whole North West of NSW.

In 2005 it was suggested that Mr. Carr could secure his 348,000 hectares of new Conservation Areas without endangering the continued operation of all the then existing sawmills. Unfortunately commonsense was not a consideration and all demands of the conservation lobby were accepted by the Government of the day at a cost of \$80M.

One would hope that the doctrine of compromise as recently enunciated by the Tasmanian Leader of the Greens Party might extend to the present enquiry so that the existing Sawmilling Industry reliant on the South-Western Cypress State Forests represented by the Narrandera, Condoblin and Baradine Mills might continue to exist. This might be achieved by considering only dedicating non cypress forest areas for future conservation areas.



Patrick Paul  
Director.