

## **Questions on Notice: Long term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products inquiry**

### **Question on Notice 1 (page 5)**

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** When you approve one it is just based on the individual circumstances for that property, right? You do not need to do a sort of local or regional assessment. You are not making a judgement about if this property and that property and that property all log at the same time, we are going to have this cumulative regional assessment? There is nothing like that in the approval process, is there?

**Dr TYNDALL:** We do a risk assessment of each of the approvals that we approve, including the neighbouring properties and what the habitat is on those neighbouring areas. That is part of our risk assessment framework when we approve plans.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** So if someone gets in first and then the neighbour wants to do it as well, there might be a restriction on them based on the fact that their neighbour has already got an approval in similar habitat?

**Dr TYNDALL:** That would trigger a site visit by our staff to go and talk to the landholder.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Okay. How many of those sorts of site visits do you do in any given year?

**Dr TYNDALL:** I would have to take that on notice. It has obviously been constrained since COVID at the moment.

### **Response:**

Local Land Services Private Native Forestry staff undertook 67 site visits from 1 January – 1 December 2021. A total of 97 site visits were undertaken in 2020.

As noted in the hearing, site visits have been restricted due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and Public Health Orders in 2020-2021.

### **Questions on Notice 2 (page 9)**

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** There has been some suggestion in some of the Government Information Public Access Act documents that we got back last year that Forestry Corporation, in the aftermath of the fires, was pushing for access to private native forestry. I think they were engaging directly with LLS—that is certainly the suggestion in some of the minutes from the working group meetings—to get access for their contractors to private operations. Mr Witherdin, what is the extent of the cooperation between Forestry Corporation and LLS to get access for Forestry Corporation to be able to supply their customers with private native forestry materials?

**Mr WITHERDIN:** Certainly my understanding, very limited. I think, to talk in terms of fires, that only about 4 per cent of the private native forestry estate was impacted by the fires. So that was sort of the good news there. Also, within that that was affected there is sort of no salvage harvesting available either. But certainly, in terms of that working with Forestry, maybe you can comment on that, Dr Tyndall, but I certainly do not have any engagement as part of that with Forestry.

**Dr TYNDALL:** We do not hand out, obviously, the details of private landholders to third parties without their consent. I would have to take that on notice, but my understanding is that we did not approve any PNF plans for Forestry Corporation as a result of the fires.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** I am not suggesting that they were approved. Certainly the suggestion in the emails that were contained within the recent call for papers—they were the working group minutes—was, "Forestry is pushing us for access to private native forestry," so I am just wondering how that happened. Did LLS, on the South Coast primarily, contact some private native forestry approval holders and suggest, "Hey, you might like to reach out to these contractors or to the local Forestry Corporation branch and say you wouldn't mind selling some timber. At the moment they're looking for trees for local mills"? Is that how it would have happened?

**Dr TYNDALL:** I would have to take that on notice because I am not across that.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Okay. I would like to get an understanding of the level of cooperation around that.

**Dr TYNDALL:** Yes.

### **Response**

Local Land Services does not provide information on PNF approvals to third parties, including Forestry Corporation.

Local Land Services is responsible for extension and advisory services for private native forestry. As part of this role, Local Land Services provides advice to landholders on undertaking private native forestry however Local Land Services does not provide recommendations on forestry consultants, companies, contractors or mills to landholders.

**Question on Notice 3 (page 10)**

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** My questions are to Mr Witherdin. Given the time, you may want to take them on notice. As I understand it, I think you said that essentially the LLS took over from the EPA in about April 2018. Is that correct?

**Mr WITHERDIN:** Yes, that is correct.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** You mentioned an increase in your FTEs since then. There are a couple of aspects to this. Actually, there are probably more than two. Could you provide us a schematic of the org chart now with that group of people that you have taken on board since then and their roles, just so that we have a better idea about how you have had to gear up for this new role? The second part is, I would really like to get an understanding of just what LLS's role is: how you operate in the PNF space, what your role is as per the legal requirements that are imposed on you and how, if at all, that differs to when the EPA was involved. Can you take that on notice? I just want some clarity around what LLS's role is and a bit of an idea about what your uptake in staff looks like, and why.

**Mr WITHERDIN:** Yes, we would be really happy to do that and then happy to follow up in more detail if you would like to as well, Mr Veitch. We can talk you right through that and explain how it all operates. That is not a problem.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Okay, thank you.

**Response:**

**Local Land Services' role under relevant legislation:**

Local Land Services (LLS) is responsible for the approval and extension functions for Private Native Forestry (PNF). This function was transferred from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to LLS under the *Forestry Legislation Amendment Act 2018*, which moved the regulatory arrangements for PNF from Part 5C of the *Forestry Act 2012* to under Part 5B of the *Local Land Services Act 2013*. The EPA retained the compliance and enforcement function for PNF.

**Private native forestry resourcing:**

In the transfer of approvals and advisory functions to LLS in April 2018, a total of 3 full-time employees (FTE) were transferred from the EPA to LLS.

In 2019/20, the NSW Government approved an additional \$2.4 million per annum to the Private Native Forestry unit of LLS. The PNF Operations team currently includes 12 FTE responsible for the administration of the LLS PNF program, including processing and approving PNF Plan applications, providing advice and support to PNF landholders, and developing and delivering extension services to landholders and PNF contractors.

### LLS's Private Native Forestry Extension Program:

Since 2018, LLS has worked to develop a comprehensive extension program and ensure the long-term sustainability of private native forest management in NSW. An outline of LLS's key programs and initiatives for private native forestry are outlined below.

#### Private Native Forestry Extension

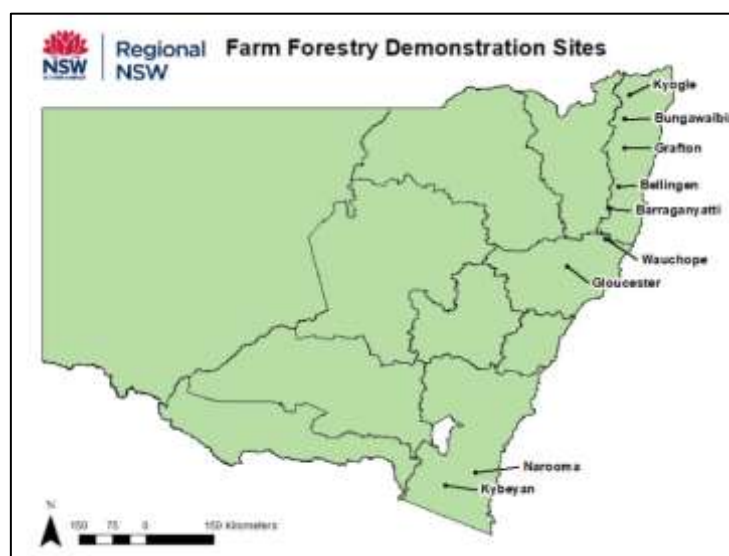
Local Land Services has developed a multi-tiered extension program for landholders and PNF contractors to improve engagement with Local Land Services and PNF, voluntary compliance, and best practice forest management on private land. As part of this program, LLS has partnered with the North East NSW Forestry Hub and a forestry training provider to deliver a series of field days that provide landholders will training and information on all stages of forest management including assessment of environmental and productive values, planning, operations, regeneration and ongoing management for forest health and condition.

The field days have been successful in improving landholder understanding and confidence in basic forest management practices, with 81% of participants indicating an improved understanding of native forest management.

To complement the field-based workshops, LLS has also developed a Webinar series, designed to engage landholders and forest managers that may not have the availability to attend a full day of training. The first Webinar series was attended by approximately 300 participants and included sessions on:

- Private Native Forestry rules and regulations
- Principles of forest health and management
- Forest assessment, forest products and values
- Forest management planning and operations to improve long-term sustainable management
- Fire management and regeneration

To facilitate the delivery of field-based training, LLS has built a network of PNF demonstration sites across the State in partnership with Private Native Forestry landholders. These sites provide on-ground examples of forest management and include a range of forest types and management histories:



### Contractor and forest manager training

LLS has partnered with TAFE NSW's Forest Industries Skills Centre to facilitate participation in a recognised Native Forest Operators course. A total of 36 students are enrolled in upcoming training, with demand exceeding available places. Training will occur in Wauchope and Grafton in 2022.

LLS is also a Project Board member for the Contractor Training and Certification Program led by the Department of Primary Industries and the Australian Forest Contractors Association, which is working to develop a Forest Contractor Training Program and Contractor Certification Scheme that will help improve forest contractor practices across NSW.

### Forest Certification Program

There is growing demand for certified sustainable timber however the timber certification processes are typically designed for large businesses and come with significant cost and administrative burden for individual landholders. Consequently, there are very few native farm forests certified in Australia.

To help alleviate the administrative burden associated with the certification process, LLS has developed a Farm Forestry Certification package that provides a pathway for landholders and forest managers to become certified under the Responsible Wood Standard for Sustainable Forest Management, endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

The Certification package will assist landholders in seeking and obtaining forest certification and mitigate the associated time and cost involved in the process to enable landholders to obtain certification, add value to the timber products they produce, access a wider range of markets and strengthen certified supply chains in regional NSW.

To help ensure the package for forest certification is practical and fit for purpose for the range of PNF operations in NSW, LLS will pilot a Certification program in 2022 with a small group of landholders in partnership with Responsible Wood.