

**Submission
No 452**

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: John P. Browne Pty. Limited

Name: Mr Philip Browne

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JOHN P. BROWNE PTY. LIMITED

A.C.N. 000 364 278

393 Mowbray Road,
Chatswood, NSW 2067

MERCHANTS
GENERAL IMPORTING AND EXPORTING
SAWMILLERS' AGENTS
EST 1931

POSTAL ADDRESS:
P.O. BOX 1250
CHATSWOOD, NSW 2057

PHONE: (02) 9411 7888
FAX: (02) 9413 1796

The Director,
GPSC 5
NSW Legislative Council,
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney

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Submission to The Inquiry into Management of Public Land in NSW.

John P Browne P/L (Est 1931) operates in the NSW timber industry processing hardwood resourced from Forests NSW.

Resource security in the form of legislated Forest Agreements and specific Wood Supply Agreements is the basis of timber milling businesses and the security that provides for our ongoing investment in our business.

Currently only 31% of forests available for timber production are actually accessible under regulations which were imposed after Forest Agreements were legislated. The excluded areas, the 69%, needs to be managed and silviculturally treated if the forests are to be maintained for timber production.

NSW Forest Agreements were set up to better manage the forest resource and maintain a guaranteed wood supply to the industry. The strategy was to facilitate investment into value adding of timber products. The timber industry has well delivered its part in the strategy.

Our company, and the rest of the industry invested heavily in the outcomes of Forest Agreements on the basis that all of the forest determined for timber production would be managed that way, not just a third of it. Unless the regulations are substantially eased our investments and our businesses will be unsustainable in the near future.

Industry has relied on the yield determinations of Forests NSW, the Comprehensive Regional Assessments and the delivery of resource in accordance with Wood Supply contracts. To maintain and continue investment into the timber industry we need resource security to 2023 and beyond. That security will then deliver rural and regional income, jobs in country towns and a sustainable timber supply for building construction and infrastructure development.

The plantation estate is a fairly small resource; it currently contributes 20% to the determined forest yields. The wood characteristics and species available will never be a substitute product for regrowth native forests. Even if substantial investment into plantations is established, and those plantations are protected from reservation, timber resources will not be produced for at least 30 years and that will also require further investment into thinning product markets.

Forest assessments also reserved large tracts of land, without justification, without sound assessment, and without a balance of conservation values with social and economic values. Even plantations were placed into the reserve system. In many circumstances the conservation values can and should be improved through management. That is how the values existed there beforehand. Reservation now only exposes those values to catastrophic risk of wildfire and other problems of neglect.

Many reserves created since 1995 are still without management plans and the values for which they were reserved remain a mystery. They should be reassessed and brought back into sound forest management to protect the values that they previously held.

At present, under the current regulations restricting access, the small area of forests able to be harvested on the North Coast are being overcut. We need the access that was committed in Forest Agreements, we need the resource on which we have invested so heavily, we need better leadership from government to ensure long term sustainability for a strong and competitive, ecologically sustainable, economically viable forest industry.

The balance between conservation values and social and economic outcome of forest management needs to be re-established. The current attitude of Greens is that reservation is the absolute objective regardless of the cost to communities, jobs and business. That is not the balance on which Forest Agreements were legislated!

Properly managed forests ensure, protect and can improve conservation outcomes, store carbon and earn income to justify management, as they have done for the past 100 years. It is time to take conservation off welfare, respect environmental values of management and reduce the cost of reservations (including bushfire management) for taxpayers.

As a member of the NSW Forest Products Association we fully endorse the comprehensive submission by the FPA. It has been with their representation and participation in establishing a sound balance with resource security that we have invested many millions of dollars, employed people in country towns and have substantially improved the value of timber products from State Forests of NSW.

Yours sincerely,

Philip J P Browne.
Director.