

**Submission
No 107**

**INQUIRY INTO LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND
FUTURE OF THE TIMBER AND FOREST PRODUCTS
INDUSTRY**

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My name is Scott Baron I have lived most of my life in Batlow surrounded by forestry. I am nearly 60 years old and am qualified in Horticulture for nearly 40 years. In my childhood the forestry was Hardwood and Softwood in later years it has become a monoculture of Pinus radiata. My father worked for Forest NSW as a Clerk.

Batlow has lost a lot of forestry jobs over the years closures of the hardwood mills as softwood production for timber and pulp is the way the forestry has gone in this district. The closure of the Batlow Forestry Office was a huge loss 5 Foresters and the clerical staff relocated to Tumbarumba and Sydney . Over the years forestry field staff has been reduced through retirements and staff being poached by National Parks. Then 5 or 6 years ago the closure of the Forestry Workshop lost 9 jobs along with the strong history of training good mechanics. This also removed a base for machinery and a low loader to move machinery where it is needed, at short notice this proved to be a huge loss during the Dunns Road fire. Friends of mine that forte the fires volunteering for RFS have told many stories of lack of help from state forests. Not many years ago if there was a fire on rural land the forestry would be there to help put it out so it didn't get into the forestry, one of my friends told me, this doesn't happen anymore and fire fighting put onto volunteers. Forestry seems to be not taking it's responsibility seriously. I do worry that the Forest Industry and communities like Batlow may not be sustainable, remember Batlow was undefendible.

The pine forest at Dunns Road where the fire started was being harvested and chipped for boiler fuel for Visy prior to the fire, because it was poor quality and not good enough for timber or pulp. This plantation is a private plantation and didn't have adequate fire fighting ability .Also this plantation is planted in an area that is too hot, low rainfall and poor soil not really suitable for Pinus radiata. I believe this plantation is going to be replanted this year surely this is not sustainable or anywhere near profitable. This land would be much better turned back to cattle or sheep or native bush. In this instance the government shouldn't allow plantations to be planted in the wrong areas because it has proven not viable.

As a child I remember the clearing of native hardwood bush with big bulldozers very impressive when you're a 8 year old and you are told planting pine this is the future. I remember my father commenting that a certain forester would plant pine trees in our back yard if we'd let him. As the years went on it became noticeable that pine was planted too close to creeks and waterways with no native bush corridors left anywhere. This is really noticeable after the 2019 fire we now look out on a Luna landscape with nothing regenerating naturally in the area planted as pine, except possibly blackberries.I also hear stories of very bad erosion on steep ground where burnt pine has been harvested straight up or straight down these hills. Also stories of pine logs fallen into creeks and on steep country unable to be retrieved just left. The Adelong Creek runs brown every time it rains due to the harvested forestry areas. If a farmers treated their land this way I'm sure the EPA would have something to say.

About 15 or 20 years ago the an article in the local newspaper stated that the Forest Industry was going to replant indigenous bush 20 metres either side of the waterways as the blocks of pine were harvested. Planting indigenous native bush that would have been there before pine was planted so there would be something left to protect the waterways from erosion and keep it healthy. I can't see any evidence of this in the landscape I'm guessing it was a superficial feel good article in the local newspaper. I hear stories from local landholders, adjoining the pine forest, that there are creeks and springs running like they used to since the pine is gone. Batlow is a high rainfall area 1250 mms per year one of the most important catchment in the Murray Darling river system.

My suggestion is that The forest industry now has the opportunity to replant the wet gullies waterways and steep country for the improvement and long-term health of the catchment and sustainability of the plantation by not having all the top soil washing away.

Talking to my friends that were fighting the Dunns Rd fire with the RFS in the pine forest trying to save Batlow from burning they said the pine burnt fiercely but where there was blackberries it was twice as bad.

My suggestion is that The forest industry needs to join with National Parks and The National Farmer Association to canvas the Federal Government to fund the CSIRO to find a successful biological control of Blackberry. If we could get blackberries out of the landscape the next bush fire would not be as bad and the cost of controlling this invasive weed would be a lot less making all our businesses more viable.

Batlow has been doing it tough since the bushfire the access to the Western Side of Blowering Dam being not allowed due to pine harvesting and the bad state of the roads now 16 months still closed. This has had devastating effect on tourist traffic through our main street. Our cafe closed last week another loss to the town.

It worries me that the State Government was going to sell off state forests before the bushfire devastated the plantations. I am opposed to this as I am really concerned for the environment and public access for tourism could be stopped if it is sold off.

I am happy to discuss or debate any of these points I have raised.

Yours faithfully.

Scott Baronople.