

TIMBER QUEENSLAND POLICY STATEMENT

HARDWOOD PLANTATIONS

AUGUST 2004

Queensland's hardwood timber industry has committed to the maximum extent possible, to a transition that will see its timber resource obtained from plantation grown timber and not from State native forests. This will ensure the hardwood timber industry will have a secure future as part of a vibrant and competitive plantation processing sector in this state.

This commitment and vision by industry was a key element of the SEQ Forests Agreement, and to facilitate this transition the Government has established 5,000 ha of hardwood sawlog plantations in SEQ. Independently of the SEQFA, DPI Forestry has since committed to establishing a further 5,000 ha of sawlog plantations.

Whilst the Government has to date committed to establishing a total of 10,000 ha of sawlog plantations, the commitment by the Government as part of the SEQFA to *active efforts to encourage plantings from the private sector* have not amounted to a significant investment in sawlog plantations by the private sector, with a total of less than 2,000 ha planted since 1999.

The private sector has been most active in establishing short rotation 'fibre' crops in Queensland, with approximately 20,000 ha established since 1999. The timber industry acknowledges the importance of an associated short rotation sector to generating viable residue markets and a critical mass in the plantation industry.

The commitment by hardwood timber industry to a transition out of native forests will continue to require further establishment of a substantial plantation resource, as an internationally competitive plantation-based industry will require much larger volumes than those currently processed from native forests.

In the first instance, Timber Queensland believes that a commitment is required to a target of 40,000 ha of sawlog plantation in Southeast Queensland and the Western Hardwoods Area by the year 2010. This would amount to establishment of a further 5,000 ha per year in addition to the area already committed by DPI Forestry. Additional plantings are sought in Central and North Queensland, where land availability and climate should enable the establishment of additional commercial plantation regions.

Industry recognises that much of the funding for these plantations needs to come from the private sector. Impediments to sawlog plantation investment need to be removed, and if necessary, assistance provided to stimulate investment.

Financial support in the order of that provided by the Government in the SEQFA plantation program to facilitate a transition could be used to leverage the private sector to plant more than double the area achieved in SEQ through direct investment by the Government. Such a program would in no way restrict a corporatised DPI Forestry from accessing financial assistance on the same basis as any other private sector organisation.

The benefits of industry's commitment to a transition are clear, with the maintenance and development of a long-term industry that supports many regional economies and associated jobs, and the opportunity to achieve conservation outcomes without the hostility of the Wet Tropics or Fraser Island type decisions.

Timber Queensland is seeking a renewed commitment by the State Government to facilitating a transition for the hardwood industry to a vibrant hardwood plantation sector. To that end, Timber Queensland believes the following is required:

- A commitment by the Government to a target of 40,000 ha of hardwood sawlog plantations in the SEQ / Western Hardwood areas by 2010;
- Establishment of a dedicated unit within Government to deliver on the target area of plantations;
- Completion of the Queensland Forest Practices System (QFPS) to deliver harvest security and a code of practice for plantations on private land;
- Removal of any further impediments to plantation establishment or processing in Queensland;
- Funding to support plantation establishment in the order of that dedicated to plantation establishment in the SEQFA; and
- Immediate implementation of the plantation research and development program as committed under the Statewide Forests Process.

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