

1 April 2011

Mr Tom Wise
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Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration A
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RE: AFG SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC NATIVE FORESTS TRANSITION

Australian Forest Growers (AFG) is the national association representing around 1200 private forest growers from 24 regional branches across Australia's forest growing regions. AFG's members include farm plantation growers, private native forest managers and private commercial plantation companies predominantly focussed on timber products. Founded in 1969, AFG has for over forty years, advocated responsible establishment and management of forests on private land providing the multiple outcomes that the community increasingly demands. The growing of commercial plantations and sustainable active management of private native forests by our members has been delivering improved landscape health outcomes for decades, as well as complementing existing productive land use practices.

AFG welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Public Native Forests Transition. AFG, in consultation with its Tasmanian Branch, is concerned that recent developments associated with the forest industry could have the potential to unravel the many positive outcomes that have been achieved over the last 30 years, particularly within the private native forest sector.

It is important that the recent evolution in thinking and activity in relation to private native forests be understood in the light of past achievements. To this end, the following provides a brief outline of the change in attitude over the last three decades – quite a recent history given the life cycle of plantations and managed native forests.

Analysis of the history of private native forestry within Tasmania shows that prior to the development of substantial markets for non-sawlog material in the early 1970's, landowners largely regarded native forests as an impediment to maximising their full agricultural income potential. Generally, markets for sawlog could be accessed when such material was available. However, the inability to market the residues generated by this activity, together with an increased proportion of remaining standing trees less suitable for sawlog production, led to a progressive degradation of the private forest estate overall, an historic pattern which was also widespread in forests elsewhere in Australia.

Following the commencement of the export woodchip industry in Tasmania in the early 1970's, a market for residue material did develop and, consequently, many landowners took the opportunity to clear their land of degraded forest to expand other agricultural activities. Fortunately, within the first decade of this expanded forest utilisation, both the government and the industry recognised the importance of private native forestry's contribution to the overall resource requirements of the Tasmanian forest industry. Various actions were subsequently introduced to encourage private forest owners to embrace sustainable forest management as part of their overall long term property planning system. This

encouragement also included seeking to expand the resource base by having landowners add plantation establishment and management to activities they might consider when developing property management outcomes.

Industry addressed this objective by ensuring field staff were available to encourage landowners to view sustainable native forestry and plantation development as part of the ongoing management planning for their properties. The state government created a Private Forestry Division within the Forestry Commission, together with a specially selected council of appropriate representatives, to advise the Minister for Forests on issues relating to the achievement of sustainable private forest management and growth in resource availability from this sector. Upon the Forestry Commission being transformed into a government business enterprise, the private forestry division became a separate identity, Private Forests Tasmania (PFT), with the advisory council becoming a Board of Directors. Throughout this period of change, strong support and encouragement of enhanced private forest management has also been provided by representative organisations such as Australian Forest Growers (AFG), both nationally and in Tasmania.

These activities have achieved a very positive outcome for Tasmania with the majority of private forest owners strongly committed to managing their forest estate on a fully sustainable, intergenerational basis, thereby actively providing a positive mix of economic, environmental and social benefits to the community.

AFG is therefore particularly concerned with some of the current developments associated with plans outlined in the recent **“Tasmanian Forests Statement of Principles to lead to an Agreement”**.

We note that this document has been developed over recent months and signed by representatives of a number of industry related organisations, none of whom represents private non-industrial forest owners. Also, at least in the case of AFG, their peak representative body, no invitation to participate was offered.

The opening comment of the document states that the aim of the process was to resolve the conflict over forests in Tasmania, protect native forests and develop a strong, sustainable timber industry. AFG is intrigued by the reference to resolving conflict, as this industry has participated in recent times in a number of enquiries and assessments, all of which have analysed the science of various claims and considerations, and have resulted in outcomes embraced by industry to improve its sustainability. While the Principles outlined in the document are intended to apply further restrictions on access to public (as opposed to private) native forests in Tasmania, AFG believes that if implemented there will be significant impacts on the future of private forestry in Tasmania.

Firstly, if the decision to reduce access to public native forests is to be determined by ENGO's, what assurance do we have that such decisions will be based on relevant science? Overall, the publicity relating to this process has implied that a large proportion of public native forests will be removed from access for wood production. Primarily it is AFG's strong view that the right of access to the private native forest estate must be in no way further encumbered, whether by reduction of access to the resource or by limitations on alternatives for use of the resource. Even if private native forest access does not change, there is risk that market access for wood products of private native forests could diminish significantly. This may occur as a result of either a marked reduction in current processing capacity (whether by perceived insufficiency of resource or by corporate determination to

exit the current native hardwood milling sector) or by denial of access to resource utilisation options (including the export of wood chip and/or providing biomass feedstock to the developing renewable energy market).

One possible negative implication for private native forestry concerns the principle relating to forest biomass for energy production. The Principles Agreement states that only plantation forest processing and harvest residues will be permitted to use as biomass stock. However, positive sustainable management of native forests will also generate residues during harvesting and for the foreseeable future, these will only be suitable for woodchip or biomass utilisation. As markets for biomass energy products such as electricity and ethanol develop, it could be both economically and environmentally preferable to direct residues to such markets rather than be totally dependent on the woodchip sector – which will always be subject to changes in demand and availability. AFG rejects any attempt to limit the market options of any forest resource, especially by seeking to determine what the best market use for a resource is via regulation. Once a forest resource is legally and sustainably harvested, it must be entirely up to the owner to choose their preferred market options. Restrictions as proposed in relation to limiting utilisation of forest biomass from native forests for renewable energy production are no more than political wedges against the legitimate use of legally and sustainably sourced product. It is also inconsistent with recent developments within renewable energy markets of Europe and North America.

AFG also wishes to reinforce its support for the role Private Forests Tasmania (PFT) has played in helping to achieve the positive outcomes delivered by the private forestry sector in Tasmanian economic, environmental and social wellbeing in recent years. AFG strongly believes that the need for such an entity continues, particularly in view of the changes which are occurring and are predicted to occur within the forestry sector. The Tasmanian and Australian economies stand to benefit from an increase in sustainable forest resource availability and product manufacturing growth made possible directly through the support of government and private partnerships which are most evident in agencies such as PFT.

The focus on forest certification outlined in the list of principles also reinforces the need for such an entity to be available to assist the private sector in achieving this goal. While AFG supports the option of certification being made available to the sector, it must be recognised that the cost burden of certification is substantial on small private growers. As there is currently no market premium available, and none foreseeable, small growers cannot be expected to bear such a cost alone. Further it is AFG's view that there is already sufficient regulation in the forest industry, especially in Tasmania, such that added certification is not necessary to demonstrate either legality or sustainability and thus it becomes a marketing tool only. Finally in this context there should be no differentiation in the Principles between currently recognised certification schemes.

AFG also notes that if changes occurring within the forestry industry in Tasmania result in private landowners being unable to access appropriate markets for the full range of products, their interest and incentive in sustainable management of these forest estates will diminish, thus leading rapidly to the further loss of environmental, economic and social contributions. Should this occur we run the risk of returning to a time when private forestry was of a minor or a negative value to property owners and to Tasmania. Equally should the resolution of the Principles in any way result in the erosion of access to native forest on private land then growers will require substantial compensation for such losses, including the value of the standing timber resource and perpetual management fees. For example, if the definition of 'high conservation value forests' is adopted on public land, it is easy to see

how this could then be fostered upon private land. No matter how ill conceived or good the intention, the result would be areas of private native forest that could not be harvested even though today they are eligible to be harvested and regenerated under the stringent conditions of the Forest Practices Code.

In summary, AFG is vitally concerned that any changes enshrined in the Tasmanian Principles of Agreement process, or following from it, do not impact on private forest growers' access to their private native forest resource; that utilisation of the resource must not be restricted by purpose (e.g. by precluding the utilisation of biomass for renewable energy uses); that forest certification does not become a requirement additional to the existing Code of Practice; and that it be understood that any reduction of processing capacity is highly likely to have a deleterious impact on market options for privately owned resource.

AFG would be pleased to provide a further understanding of our concerns at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Warwick Ragg
Chief Executive

Further Reading

Ian Dickenson AO. 2008. 'Balancing the three-legged stool: a case study of forest conversion and conservation', Biodiversity: Integrating Conservation and Production. Case Studies from Australian Forests and Fisheries, CSIRO Publishing, T Lefroy, K Bailey, G Unwin, T Norton (ed), Collingwood, Victoria, pp. 45-54. ISBN 9780643094581 (2008).

Unwin, GL and Lord, J* and Lyons, A*, 2008. 'Measuring the biodiversity values of a small-scale farm forestry enterprise in northern Tasmania', Biodiversity: Integrating Conservation and Production. Case Studies from Australian Forests and Fisheries, CSIRO Publishing, T Lefroy, K Bailey, G Unwin, T Norton (ed), Collingwood, Victoria, pp. 225-234. ISBN 9780643094581 (2008).

ATTACHED

Lyons, A 2011, 'Benham's forests are here for the long haul', *Australian Forest Grower*, autumn, in print

Lyons, A 2009, 'Demonstrating the benefits of plantations', *Australian Forest Grower*, winter, p. 29.

Lyons, A 2009, 'True tree changers on a visionary scale', *Australian Forest Grower*, spring, pp. 33-34.

Lyons, A 2004, 'One super scheme that has produced many winners', *Australian Forest Grower*, spring, pp. 15-16.

Benham's forests are here for the long haul

Arthur Lyons

SFM Forest Products held a field day in November 2010 on the O'Connor family property 'Benham' near Campbell Town in Tasmania's Midlands. The aim was to show private forest owners the potential of applying first class forest management practices to dry forests.

The take home message was; good planning, attention to quality, adherence to the Forest Practices Code and 'hands on' involvement by forest owners results in sustainable forest management and a reasonable on-going financial return.

The forest has been harvested up to four times over six generations since the late 1800s. Better quality timber was supplied to local mills until the 1970s when woodchip markets enabled many poor quality trees to be removed and the forest rejuvenated. Now the forest is sustainably managed for future generations. In the past, income from harvesting was valuable in hard times; recently, it assisted funding irrigation development on the property.

Today, the O'Connor's aim is to ensure the forest has the highest level of environmental credentials. Over 50% of the 10,000ha forest on 'Benham' has been reserved from harvesting and will largely provide biodiversity. The O'Connors have engaged SFM Forest Products to manage about 2,000ha of native forest using best forest management practices standards. SFM, a 100% Tasmanian owned company, assists forest owners maximise both the commercial and environmental values of their forests. While many think these objectives are contrary, the O'Connors and SFM have shown these objectives are complementary and in fact necessary to maintain the environmental values.

SFM ensures income from harvesting is maximised by very careful segregation of logs according to their value. At Benham, Bob Williams, one of Tasmania's best log graders, was brought in to do this job. About 45% of logs were graded for sawlogs and veneers. Given that these logs can be worth up to 400% more than pulpwood, getting segregation right is essential for profitability. Logs are then sold to different markets for the highest possible price.

At Benham, logs are sorted into six different classes for potential production of flooring and framing, furniture, veneers, pallets, posts, sleepers and paper products. SFM always looks to first marketing to local saw millers. SFM has Australian Forest Standard accreditation for planning, roading, selective harvesting, silviculture, fire control and regeneration. SFM are seeking Forest Stewardship Certification accreditation as it helps maintain existing markets and assists entry into new markets.

To ensure forest sustainability, harvesting systems are matched to the condition of the forest. Here, potential sawlog trees are retained and given space to grow and regeneration of new trees is achieved by light burning and seeding to ensure the forests are adequately stocked.

Forests are selectively harvested and not clearfelled. This ensures continuous forest cover, minimum impact on native plants and animals, reduced fire risk, and most of all enables the

forest to be maintained in a healthy ecological condition and a continuous process of rejuvenation and growth. At Benham, about 30% of the forest cover on small forest areas is sustainably harvested every 30 years and could be continued indefinitely.

SFM staff work very closely with forest owners to ensure the forest owners aims are understood and met. At Benham, Brett Stevenson, works with Frank and his son Robert, a seventh generation O'Connor, on forest estate planning, certified forest practices plans, supervision of forest operations and compliance.

Importantly, harvesting is monitored to ensure it is not over done and that adequate trees are retained in good condition for either seed, the next harvest or biodiversity.

The 30 or more landholders, including AFG members, attending the day, left confident that Benham's forests are here for the long haul.

Demonstrating the benefits of plantations

BY ARTHUR LYONS, BRANCH PRESIDENT

Senator Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries attended last April's Tasmanian Branch Annual Field Day at Camden, north-east Tasmania. The day demonstrated the substantial and largely unrecognised contribution private plantation owners, such as the Calvert and Smith families, make to the forest industry. The latest research on native regrowth thinning was presented by Forestry Tasmania.

In 1968 Neville Calvert bought unviable farm land (pasture and forests) from several farmers to make a viable unit at Camden about 50km northeast of Launceston. Department of Agriculture advice was that the native forests were of little value, yet Neville sold logs from the forests to pay for his children's education and the grocery bills. Over time, other landholders in the area sold their unviable farms to forestry interests for plantation development.

As the seasons dried and costs increased, Neville, by 1989, had to further develop the property to remain viable. He leased land to Forest Enterprises Australia (FEA) and to Gunns. He also established his own plantation joint venture with help from the National Afforestation Program and the Tasmanian Government's Eucalypt Grant Program. About 30% of the property is under plantations and the farming enterprise is integrated with the plantation development.

"The yield and price achieved from growing plantation timber was 15-20 times more profitable than farming livestock," Neville said. "Without the plantations we could not have afforded to have two families live comfortably on the property."

In the early 1990s, FEA bought farm land at Camden and planted eucalypt plantations. Tony Cannon, a director of FEA and the AFG's National President, said the 80ha block inspected on the day was thinned at nine years and in 5-6 years will be harvested to supply about 60% sawlogs and 40% pulpwood.



(L to R) Tony Cannon, Neville Calvert, Mark Smith, Sue Smith, Robin Dickson, Owen Smith and Senator Richard Colbeck at the regrowth thinning trial.

Owen and Sue Smith, winners of the Stihl-AFG State Tree Farmer Award 2007, and their son Mark took pride in showing off their plantation enterprise. The family has planted and managed eucalypt plantations for over 20 years on their land, as well as managing native forests. The better Camden plantations are cutting 400-500t/ha at harvest at age 17, and second rotation plantations have been successfully established.

Peter Williams, Forestry Tasmania (FT), outlined the work FT and contractor Ken Padgett have been doing over the last two years to make native forest regrowth thinning work. Ken is harvesting about 800t/week while retaining a basal area, being 80% sawlogs, of 12-15m²/ha. Damage to retained stems is less than 10%. If such harvesting can be proven viable, it has wide application over thousands of hectares of public and private forest.



BALLARAT BRANCH

Addressing farm forestry's missing link

BY GIB WETTENHALL, TREASURER

Integrating conservation and production was the theme of the AFG's Ballarat Conference in 2004. Ballarat Region Treegrowers (BRT) has now sunk some of our profits from that conference into a guide that addresses the missing link in farm forestry – how to put biodiverse habitat back into bare, rural landscapes.

The book BRT has just published looks, then, at the other end of the scale from a straight-rowed, monoculture plantation. *Recreating the Country* presents 10 design principles for what we are calling 'biorich' plantations. Integrated with other forms of farm forestry and environmental plantings, these would aim to enrich habitat potential across rural landscapes, leading to more 'wildlife-friendly' properties.

Author Stephen Murphy has run a local native plants nursery for 25 years. He spoke at a workshop BRT held two years ago on the topic of 'Boosting biodiversity,' asserting that treegrowers had to rethink their revegetation strategies to match the sophistication of natural design principles in order to create habitat. The book evolved from there, with funding support from the Central Victorian Farm Plantations PFDC (now gone part-time) and the Corangamite CMA.

It's a beautifully produced little book, but if you don't believe me, read the review by ecologist Richard Loyn in this edition. *Recreating the Country* can be ordered online via the AFG website for \$25 (inc p&h), or ring Christina at head office.





PROFILE: Mark and Georgina Cornelius, 'Woodbury Hill', Tunbridge Tier, Tasmania

True tree changers on a visionary scale



Rob Beseler, Territory Manager-Victoria, Stihl (left) and Warwick Ragg (right) congratulate Mark and Georgina Cornelius, Tasmanian Tree Farmers of the Year 2009.

BY ARTHUR LYONS

The coveted Stihl-AFG Tree Farmer of the Year 2009 (TAS) was awarded to Mark and Georgina Cornelius in recognition of the native forest estate they have developed and managed for sustainable forest production and conservation.

The award was announced by Warwick Ragg, Chief Executive, Australian Forest Growers, and presented by Rob Beseler, Victorian State Manager, Stihl at the Annual Farm Forestry Dinner in Launceston in August. Mark and Georgina received a plaque, a Stihl MS390 Farmboss chainsaw and \$1,500 from AFG (TAS) to assist them attend the 2010 Biennial National AFG Farm Forestry Conference.

Mark and Georgina Cornelius decided they needed a business 'tree change' and began to purchase land from 1996 to produce high quality eucalypt sawlog timber. Today they own nine properties totalling about 5,700 hectares over three renowned forestry areas of Tasmania – the central highlands, southern Tasmania and the east coast.

Mark and Georgina have set aside over 1,900ha in reserves and conservation areas. They selectively harvest wood annually, producing products ranging from high value sawlogs to lower value woodchips.

Through careful forest management they are demonstrating that this land stewardship will be sustainable for many future generations. Over 56% of the total estate is managed for native forest wood production, 9% for eucalypt plantation and, significantly, 34% of the forest consists of reserves including 1,344ha under conservation covenants. This is highly commendable by anyone's standards.

Mark and Georgina purchased their first property in 1996 and their most recent in 2008. The holdings are each briefly summarised over the page.

Jewel in the crown

The jewel in the crown is Woodbury Hill, the first property purchased by Mark and Georgina. Located near Tunbridge Tier, it is 2,200ha in size.

Not long after purchase, Mark obtained a lucrative contract to produce 10,000 hop poles for hop fields in the Derwent Valley. The poles were selectively harvested from a combination of *Eucalyptus dalrympleana* and *E. delegatensis* forests.

Prior to being purchased by Mark and Georgina, Woodbury Hill had a long history of producing top quality sawlogs that were highly sought after by local sawmills. Unfortunately, previous poor forest practices left some areas degraded and Mark and Georgina decided to lease 450ha of this land for plantation forestry.

continued page 34

**Table 1: Descriptions of the nine Cornelius properties.**

Property	Location	Area	Production		Informal Reserves	Conservation Covenants
			Native Forest	Plantation		
Woodbury Hill	Tunbridge Tier	2200	700	450		1050 <i>Poa</i> grasses, <i>E. rodwayi</i> , <i>E. viminalis</i> and peppermints
Enfield	Tunbridge Tier	339	280	16	16	17 <i>E. viminalis</i>
Cahill	Tunbridge Tier	420	320	50		50
North Clyde Run	Central Highlands	1550	1,000 <i>E. delegatensis</i>		400	150 <i>E. rodwayi</i>
Lake Leake	Lake Leake	485	380 <i>E. delegatensis</i>		20	77 <i>E. rodwayi</i>
Badger Hill	Badgers Hill	310	270		40	
Judds Creek	Huon Valley	186	80 <i>E. regnans</i>	50	50	
Braeside Road	Huon Valley	43	37 <i>E. obliqua</i>		6	
Dogs head	Lake Sorell	143	121 <i>E. delegatensis</i>		22	



Swamp peppermint, *E. rodwayi*, has been protected under conservation covenants for posterity.



Heaped harvest slash is burnt following selective harvesting at 'Enfield' – an essential practice for fuel reduction.



E. nitens plantation development – a small but important part of the forest business to maintain forest production.

continued from page 33

Mark and Georgina have set aside over 1,050ha of Woodbury Hill in a conservation covenant to maintain *Poa* grasses, *E. rodwayi*, *E. viminalis* and peppermints for future generations.

About 700ha of predominately *E. delegatensis* forest are managed through selective harvesting for commercial forestry production. Through careful management, Mark and Georgina are endeavouring to produce mainly sawlog and peelers with a minimal amount ending up as woodchips. They aim to leave a high basal area to allow for more regular harvests. Mechanical harvesters are preferred as these allow for more precise felling and reduce the damage to retained trees.

To maximise returns, Mark and Georgina work very closely with the harvesting crew to ensure their objectives are met and good forest practices are followed. The residue from the harvesting areas are formed into small heaps using an excavator and burnt at the optimum time to produce a good seed bed for regeneration and to reduce potential fire risk.

They collect their own seed and this is used to regenerate the harvested areas. Mark chemically culls dense stands of regrowth saplings to allow the trees with good form to continue growing.

Mark maintains a 'hands-on' approach to inventory and has up to 30 tree plots on each property to monitor tree growth. This inventory data helps Mark work out timeframes for future harvesting.

Each year an attempt is made to undertake cool fuel reduction burns to safeguard these valuable areas from wildfires. Fire breaks are maintained on a regular basis with contract machinery.

When asked where he had gained his initial knowledge, Mark replied: "I read up all I could on the long nights I spent as a commercial crayfisherman.

"The rest of the knowledge has been acquired from watching, listening, asking and adapting ideas to suit our own goals. Knowledge gained at various forestry field days have been invaluable part in shaping our outlook."

Mark is exploring avenues to see a portion of future harvested timber going to the peeler market for overseas export.

Arthur Lyons is President of the AFG's Tasmanian Branch.





Marion and Roger Larner, quiet achievers who are well respected by other forest growers and their neighbors.

LANNEN NATIONAL TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR 2004 AWARDS

PROFILE: Marion and Roger Larner, 'Semaphore' near Port Arthur TAS

One super scheme that has produced many winners

BY ARTHUR LYONS

As this year's runners up to the Lannen National Tree Farmer of the Year award, Marion and Roger Larner are part of a select group of the best private forest growers in Australia.

In autumn 2004, the Larners took the last step in realising their dream after investing in forestry for 30 years. With 23 neighbors, local government, other stakeholders (including Timber Australia) and the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority as witnesses, Roger and Marion signed Tasmania's first forest-based Community Agreement, paving the way for sustainable harvesting of their well-managed native forest over the next 10 years.

How many other forest growers in Australia have realised their superannuation dreams the way the Larners have? Who, in today's parlance, have achieved environmental, economic and social outcomes through natural resource management? How many others have fostered and promoted private forestry, generously encouraging others to share in their dreams, inspiring other native forest owners to do the same?

The Larners' property 'Semaphore' and its magnificent native regrowth forest provide an outstanding visual backdrop to the Port Arthur Historic Site, which is visited by over 250,000 people annually. Port Arthur is about 100km south of Hobart on Tasmania's east coast.

Marion and Roger bought the property in 1972 to manage it for their superannuation. The 162 hectare property now includes 123ha of native forest, 13ha of plantations and 26ha of pasture. The native forest regrowth is the result of clearfelling of the natural forest shortly after settlement.

DEDICATED PLANNING AND COMMITMENT

From the outset, the Larners developed a management plan and followed it. The main aim has been to manage the land within its environmental and economic capabilities. This included establishment of pine and eucalypt plantations on cleared land not suited to agriculture. Forestry was used to retire the land from agriculture and address erosion and weed infestations. The flatter areas have been appropriately developed for a beef cattle breeding stud.

Forest Practices Plans were developed for commercial harvesting in 2004, since delayed by wet weather. The plans took more than two years to complete as the Larners painstakingly considered landscape, heritage and archaeological values. To protect these values, the native forest will be harvested over 10 years.

The Larners have always planned to produce the highest quality products, optimising financial return from the forest. Forest products include veneer and saw logs, power poles, bridge logs, pulp logs, firewood and tree ferns. In addition they value the landscape, wildlife habitat, forest recreation, education, historic values, good land management and stock shelter.

HANDS-ON MANAGEMENT

The Larners take a very much hands-on involvement in management. They have undertaken themselves almost all of the property management planning and Forest Practices Plans, plantation establishment and maintenance as well as forest management.

continued page 16



continued from page 15

Marion and Roger have increased their knowledge and skills in all aspects of forestry and know their business inside out. The Larners also manage a 1,000ha native forest for a landholder who lives in Germany.

Silvicultural management objectives include improving the health and

productivity of the forest. One technique is to ring-bark, then later harvest, selected trees for firewood in order to reduce tree stocking and increase sawlog and veneer trees. Some selective logging has produced power poles.

The growth rate of the forest is 10-15m³/ha/yr. At harvest, 300 tonnes/ha will be produced, including veneer logs, sawlogs and power poles making up 20% of the harvest volume. The remaining 80% will be pulpwood and firewood. In addition, several tree ferns will be harvested from road lines and plantation areas. The harvest areas will be planted to plantation species and harvested in 20 – 30 years to provide for retirement of their son Malcom Lerner.

All planning and operations have used best management practices. Practices include soil preparation, weed control, plant genetics and browsing control. All activities have been done above the standards prescribed in the Tasmanian Code of Forest Practices, which is recognised as world standard. The Code provides a set of scientifically based standards to protect environmental values during forest establishment and harvesting. By law, a Forest Practices Plan must be prepared for all forest operations describing methods and prescriptions for the operations and for protection of special values, i.e. soil, water, flora and fauna, heritage, archeology and landscape.

Before the main pine plantation was planted, small trial plantings were conducted to assess fertility levels. As a result, copper was included in the fertiliser regime.

Pines have now been first lift pruned to 10cm stem diameter to produce high quality veneer logs after two more pruning lifts.

RISK MINIMISATION

The Larners have minimised risks to their investment by learning as much about the forestry business as possible, being involved in all aspects, diversifying and undertaking timely management.

Together, they have constructed over 4km of access tracks for firefighting. These tracks also served the horse riding business Marion conducted from 1978-84. In addition, the plantations have their own firebreaks.

They regularly review their plans and have secured their forestry investment on the property's title. Private timber reserves are registered on the property title for over 123ha. This ensures forestry operations can take place as intended without impact from changes to local planning schemes or from wider and increasing community resistance to native forest harvesting.

Over the years, the Larners main income has come from forestry consulting and teaching and their cattle breeding stud, but they have pursued a wide range of enterprises.

Diversification has included producing beef and timber, horse trail riding, and commercial tree seed production for Tasmanian and Western Australian markets. Malcom Lerner runs a seed collection/supply business. Sales from timber production include bridge logs to the local council, power poles, sawlogs from track clearing, firewood and silver wattle for furniture production. Tea tree has been donated to the Port Arthur Historic Site. The Larners have also used a portable saw to mill scantling grade timber for farm use and sale.

COMMUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Larners live on the property and have managed the forest for environmental and social outcomes, as well as economic. They have identified over 20 convict heritage sites on the property, including sawpits, quarries, dams, raceways and tramways, and have excluded these from forest operations.


A belt of blue gums and local understory plants was established around the pine plantation for landscape maintenance and to provide habitat for the endangered swift parrot. The Larners are one of a few landholders in Tasmania who have established habitat plantings for this threatened species.

One kilometre from the Port Arthur Historic Site, the Lerner's property forms a dominant and magnificent landscape backdrop to Port Arthur. With specialist advice, the Larners have designed harvesting operations to minimise the visual impact. The provision of landscape values to meet community expectations has considerably affected the timing, nature and extent of harvesting operations.

In consultation with other stakeholders, the Larners have entered into an agreement with the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority to ensure landscape values are maintained at an acceptable level. This is the first such community forest agreement in Tasmania. Because of landscape and environmental considerations, the Larners have decided on a 10 year harvest plan, rather than harvesting the forest in one year.

Through her school teaching, Marion has effectively used their property for over 20 years to educate hundreds of children about forestry and the environment. Some of these children have gone on to work in the forest industry. Further, the recent promotion in the press, television and radio recognising the Larners as recipients of the AFG Tasmanian Tree Farmer of the Year Award for 2003 has demonstrated that private landholders can manage forests for their own interests, as well as the interests of the wider community.

Roger is a member of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers forestry committee, farm forestry co-operative Farmwood Tasmania, the local fire brigade and Australian Forest Growers. He is a Forest Practices Officer and has worked as a forestry consultant for the past 15 years.

Marion and Roger have very good relations with the local community. Their forest management activities have taken into account their neighbors' quality of life, especially the visual impacts and maintenance of boundary fencing. Over the last 30 years, Marion and Roger have enthusiastically shared their knowledge and experience with the local and wider community. All of their 23 neighbors agree with the Larners' harvesting plans – a record of which any private forester could be proud. 



A field day crowd in the Larners native forest