

NAME Gavin Butcher

In the late 1990's I was an employee of the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) in Western Australia. The group that I worked with was responsible for growing and managing bluegum plantations for clients including foreign Japanese and Korean companies.

CALM had promoted growing tasmanian bluegums in the southwest of WA over a number of years and had predicted growth rates of those plantations based on the work of Dr Gary Inions.

MIS companies began operating in earnest in the South-west following the commencement of the foreign interests.

CALM's Research Group had been monitoring actual bluegum growth. Their results by 1998/99 showed growth to be significantly less than had been predicted. Of course CALM staff were very concerned that the expectations of our clients were significantly higher, and organised to inform them of the monitoring data.

It was also noted the MIS companies had been making claims of even higher yields that CALM had predicted in their prospectus documents. It was thought by CALM Executives to be in the public interest that these companies also had the most current information on predicted yields it was arranged at a seminar in Pemberton to inform the broader industry of this data. Players from the major MIS companies and their advisors attended this seminar.

While I didnt attend I was advised that there was a hostile reaction to the CALM scientist representing FPC who presented his monitoring data.

The inquiry should investigate whether these companies continued to make excessive claims of timber growth even after being informed of the likely growth rates by CALM researchers.

Many areas planted by MIS companies have since exhibited poor growth, notably Esperance and other low rainfall areas, and the Inquiry should consider whether the representations made about growth rates were sound.