

12 April 2011

The Chair  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources,  
Fisheries and Forestry  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir

**Private submission to the Inquiry "Growing Australian Forestry"**

I write to provide input to the Inquiry, with particular emphasis on water-limited tropical areas, from the viewpoint of one who has worked within the private enterprise plantation hardwood sector for over a decade.

My submission relates primarily to the following terms of reference:

1. Opportunities for and constraints upon production
4. Creating a better business environment for forest industries
7. Land use competition between the forestry and agriculture sectors

*Background*

I am a professional Forester and Soil Scientist (B.Sc.(For)/B.Sc. (ANU) 1996). I am a member of the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) and the Australian Society of Soil Science Incorporated (ASSSI), but make this submission as an individual only.

I have worked in the hardwood plantation industry in Tasmania, Queensland and the Northern Territory in a range of supervisory and management roles. I have direct experience of all aspects of plantation establishment and maintenance, as well as land evaluation, mensuration, research and economic modelling.

*The past*

Much of the recent expansion of the hardwood estate in Queensland and the Northern Territory has been in areas where rainfall is marginal for the species planted. Consequently the success of the plantation is dependent upon soils having sufficient water-holding capacity.

However, there has been limited soil information available at a property-scale to determine planting boundaries. Land purchase and plantation establishment has often been based on low-intensity surveying coupled with the experience of staff, which has inevitably been gained in other regions. This has led to optimistic expectations of plantable area, therefore inflated prices being paid for agricultural land, and to investors' funds being used to plant areas that subsequently failed.

*Conclusion*

I am in favour of increased production from hardwood plantations, but having observed some of the mistakes of the last decade, I hope that the Committee might put in place procedures to make such mistakes less likely in the future.

Yours faithfully

D.A.J. (Alex) Lindsay