

INQUIRY INTO PLANTATION FOREST INDUSTRY



Councillor Kevin Forbes – President Shire of Plantagenet - Mt Barker, Western Australia
I was elected as a Local Government Councillor for West Ward in May 1991.
Served as a Councillor for three years
Vice President for three years
Currently in my sixth year as Shire President

Establishment of the Eucalyptus Globulus plantation industry commenced in our Shire around 1991 and has steadily increased to now cover some 60,000 hectares of previously grazing and cropping land.

We also have a small area of Pinus Radiata and a less amount of Pinus Pinasta. As the timber industry established I became involved in many aspects as a Local Government representative.

With the formation of TIMBER 2002 in Albany Western Australia around 1992 I represented the Shire of Plantagenet until 1999, serving as Vice Chairperson for a considerable number of years during that time.

In 1992 the Lower Great Southern Plantation Fire Advisory Group was formed. I became the inaugural Chairperson and held the position until 2001.

I was a member of the State Coalition Governments "Farm Forestry Development Group" for the term of its operation.

Because of community pressure the Shire of Plantagenet developed a 'Town Planning Scheme' amendment to clarify the land usage issues of the plantation industry. This is waiting on State Government endorsement.

The "Timber Industry Road Evaluation Study" (TIRES) regional group was established some four years ago. I became the inaugural Chairperson, a position I still hold today.

When a State "TIRES" group was formed I was appointed to that group and have travelled to Canberra to meet with Politicians on several occasions.

I attended the official launch of Plantations 2020 in Canberra and was invited to make a presentation on the Lower Great Southern Plantation Fire Advisory Group and its activities.

In recent months I have been appointed to the Western Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Hon. Kim Chance MLC) "Plantation Industry Ministerial Advisory Committee" (PIMAC) as the only Local Government representative.

Councillor Kevin M Forbes
President Shire of Plantagenet
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30th September 2002

INQUIRY INTO PLANTATION FORESTS INDUSTRY
SUBMISSION from Kevin M Forbes, PO Box 196, Mt Barker WA 6324
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I make the following submission as an individual with much knowledge of, but no financial interest in, the Plantation Forest Industry.

I address the dot points (a) to (e) as listed in your documentation.

(a) The Plantation Industry is a new industry to the Great Southern region of Western Australia and thus has no supporting infrastructure. Private industry has developed a Chip Mill and the Port Authority has extended Albany Port. The State Government has made a small commitment to Local Government road needs to be expended over the next ten years. The Federal Government has done nothing, even though the provision of infrastructure was part of the 2020 strategy. Local Government in the Great Southern region has a proven need of \$36m for roads that will be used by the Plantation Timber Industry as haulage routes to mill and port. The State Government has a need for over \$50m in the same area. Neither the State nor Local Government have any possible hope of financing this deficiency. If the industry is forced to contribute to upgrading roads in a greater way than the maintenance already being done, it will most certainly have a major effect on the viability of this large quantity, low priced commodity. After all, the taxes from this industry go to the Federal Government.

(b) The Federal Government needs to meet the commitments it made in the 2020 Strategy documentation.

(c) There are many opportunities for environmental benefit in the lower rainfall areas. However they will not happen without substantial Government support as income from these projects will be many years away or not at all.

(d) The issue of longer rotation plantations for sawlogs is a major concern. There is a real need to progress into timber production that is of greater value than woodchips. There is little regional employment or processing activity in woodchips. With the reduction in the harvesting of native forests there must be a need for structural timber and processed board for housing, furniture etc. The long term timber plantations will have environmental benefits but will also have a severe financial impediment on landowners who will have a reduced income flow until harvest.

(e) The infrastructure for the processing industry is a serious concern. To obtain zoned, Government owned land, scheme water, grid power and sealed road access in our region, will make most projects financially unviable. The upfront development costs will be beyond available funding resources.

I look forward to meeting with you in Albany Western Australia
on Friday 11th October 2002 at 1.45pm.

Signed Kevin M Forbes PO Box 196 Mt Barker WA 6324 1st October 2002

K M Forbes