

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

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Summit addresses foresters shortage

A full house of 70 representatives attended the Tertiary Forestry Education Summit hosted by the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) in Canberra on 20 May 2008 to address the shortage of professional foresters brought about by the lack of student enrolments in forestry tertiary courses.

The Summit was opened by IFA President Dr Peter Volker FIFA RPF and addressed by Brian Farmer (representing Government), Professor Jerry Vanclay (representing the Universities) and Vince Erasmus (representing forestry industry).

The Summit was professionally facilitated by Fran Stevens of FMS Consultancy Services Ltd who handled rather often robust discussion with professional ease.

Representatives attended on behalf of forestry organisations, governments, government agencies, academics and employers. All present acknowledged the critical situation regarding the difficulty in employing professional foresters and the need to seriously address the problem of low enrolments in tertiary forestry courses.

A summary of the agreed issues and actions proposed included:

- IFA will establish a scholarship program to support students commencing in 2009. Industry has agreed to support this scholarship program on a sustaining basis and some companies may offer their own scholarships.
- Industry and government agencies will offer vacation employment to forestry students and students from related disciplines to give them an introduction to forestry careers. Employers will also examine accommodation and travel assistance measures which make vacation employment more attractive.
- The National Forestry Masters Program (NFMP) will continue to be promoted to potential students within universities and in the industry. NFMP will also seek to broaden its range of subjects offered to increase its attractiveness for continuing professional development of foresters and allied professionals.
- The IFA/NFMP will co-ordinate 'seed' funds to engage a co-ordinator and progress the major summit decisions and action items.

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