

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

ABN 48 083 197 586



31 May 2007

Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Inquiry into the Forestry Marketing and Research and Development Services Bill 2007 and Forestry Marketing and Research and Development Services (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Bill 2007

Attached is a submission from the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) on the above Bills.

Please contact me or IFA Director, Phil Pritchard (Ph: 0414 875 488) if you have any queries or require clarification on any of the issues.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Peter Volker
National President



Forest and Wood Products Australia: a submission to a Senate Inquiry from the Institute of Foresters of Australia

Background

The Senate is considering a bill to convert the Forest and Wood Products and Research and Development Corporation into an industry owned R&D and marketing company, Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA).

While the Institute of Foresters sees value in the bill there are a number of issues for consideration in the activities of the new organisation. Comments on the key issues are provided below.

The Institute of Foresters of Australia is a professional body with 1240 members engaged in all branches of forest management and conservation in Australia. The Institute is strongly committed to the principles of sustainable forest management and the processes and practices which translate these principles into outcomes.

Issues

1. The Institute supports the proposed new organisation where its activities support the National Forest Policy Statement

The Institute supports the expanded role of the proposed forest marketing on the basis that the new organisation has a continuing and significant role in national coordination of research and development consistent with the priorities as defined in the National Forest Policy Statement:

- to increase Australia's national forest research and development effort and to ensure that it is well coordinated, efficiently undertaken and effectively applied
- to expand and integrate knowledge about the many aspects of native forests, plantations, forest management, conservation, and forest product development.

In accord with the Policy Statement the Institute encourages the new organisation to promote and encourage further integration of research between growers, processors, marketers and sellers of forest products. This will enable Australia to become a leader in silvicultural management of forests to produce timber to suit customer requirements.

We would also encourage the new organisation to focus on reduction in duplication of research activities throughout Australia by promoting cooperation and integration. There should be a link between the new organisation and the existing Research Programs Co-ordinating Committee which reports to the FFPC. We note also that the recently announced priorities for Research and development corporations (discussed below) provide a focus for these activities.

2. The Institute supports an enhanced role for the new organisation in marketing of forest products

We see a significant and ongoing role for the research and marketing activities of the new body to promote national coordination and ensure an integrated approach to research and information delivery to both the industry and the community.

IFA supports the Bill as it gives greater ability to the organisation to engage in marketing and promotion of forestry and forest products. An enhanced marketing role is essential to providing an ongoing and credible brand for Australian timber and in promoting the sustainability of Australia's forest industries. We recognise the important role for the new body to engage in marketing, complimenting certification and quality assurance schemes already in place in the jurisdictions.

3. The Institute sees the need for the new organisation to provide enhanced and credible research reporting on Australian forest resources and management

The role of sustainable forest management requires substantive and ongoing research, in both production and conservation forests. The Institute has made submissions to a previous Senate inquiry in relation to research needs in national parks on fire and other issues (particularly given the implications of a drying climate) as an essential part of sustainable forest management <http://www.forestry.org.au/pdf/pdf-public/Submissions/national%20parks%2024032006.doc> . Equally the decline in research in production forestry by all agencies limits our future capacity. The new organisation therefore needs to include an increased research effort on the sustainability of forestry activities in native forests and plantations and where possible to promote the outcomes of such research to domestic and international audiences.

Effective marketing has been hampered by the quality of information pertaining to Australia's forest management. The current level of reporting and the data and information on forest resources and management is limited and fragmented. To act become a credible marketing body, the new organisation needs to deliver a mandated level of regular national reporting on the resource and the sustainability of forest management, recognising the social, environmental and economic issues for Australian forest management.

4. We support the organisation taking on recently announced priorities and supporting priorities for Research and Development corporations as they provide a basis for reporting for industry and the community

The Institute recognises the need for a strategic research agenda that the ongoing role of both industry specific research and broad national research objectives in accord with the National Forest Policy Statement. We would support the new organisation on the basis that it embraces the national research priorities recently announced by the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in May 2007. These provide specific directions where they compliment and elaborate on the priorities under that national Forest Policy statement. The priorities and supporting priorities are listed below:

Priorities

- Productivity and adding value – Improve the productivity and profitability of existing industries and support the development of viable new industries.
- Supply chain and markets – Better understand and respond to domestic and international market and consumer requirements and improve the flow of such information through the supply chain, including to consumers.
- Natural resource management – Support effective management of Australia's natural resources to ensure primary industries are both economically and environmentally sustainable.
- Climate variability and climate change – Build resilience to climate variability and adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Biosecurity – Protect Australia's community, primary industries and environment from biosecurity threats.

Key supporting the priorities

- Innovation skills – Improve the skills to undertake research and apply its findings.
- Technology – Promote the development of new and existing technologies.

While the legislation does not deal with who should contribute to the organisation through levies we support the engagement of the industry as a whole

We would encourage the new organisation to embrace non-timber forest products in the new organisation as levy payers and beneficiaries of research and promotional activities (eg honey, essential oils, ethanol).

We would encourage the new organisation to embrace the growing sector ((particularly State owned enterprises) and log export sectors as levy payers and beneficiaries of research and promotional activities

In relation to future operations we note the need for arrangements that support all forest based industries

As discussed above, we would encourage the new organisation to embrace non-timber forest products in the new organisation as levy payers and beneficiaries of research and promotional activities (eg honey, essential oils, ethanol).

About the Institute of Foresters

The Institute of Foresters of Australia is a professional body with 1240 members engaged in all branches of forest management and conservation in Australia. The Institute is strongly committed to the principles of sustainable forest management and the processes and practices which translate these principles into outcomes.

The membership represents all segments of the forestry profession, including public and private practitioners engaged in many aspects of forestry, nature conservation, resource and land management, research, administration and education. Membership is not restricted to professional Foresters. Other forestry professionals are welcome to join IFA. The main 'Objects' for which the Institute is established are:

- To advance and protect the cause of forestry
- To maintain a high standard of qualification in persons engaged in the practice of forestry
- To promote professional standards and ethical practice among those engaged in forestry
- To promote social intercourse between persons engaged in forestry
- To publish and make educational, marketing and other materials available to those engaged in forestry
- To provide the services of the Institute to forestry organisations inside Australia and in overseas countries as the Board may deem appropriate.

The Institute of Foresters of Australia appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry.

Dr Peter Volker RPF FIFA
President
31 May 2007

Contact: Phil Pritchard (Ph: 0414 875 488)