

Lessons from the last 50 years of forestry in SA

David Geddes

Forestry Australia Conference

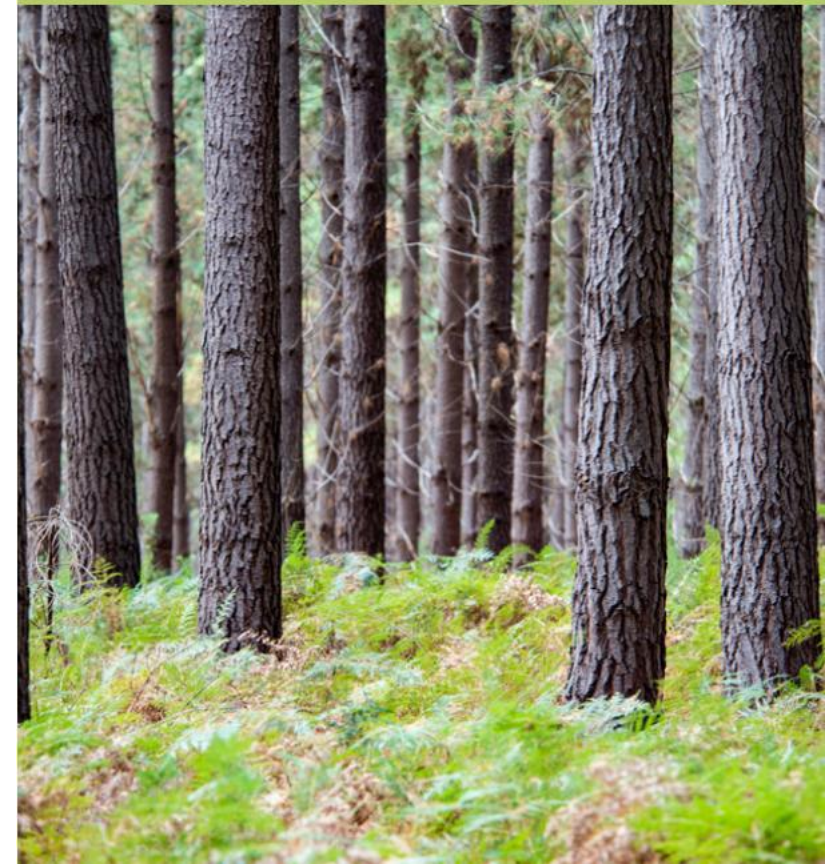
Adelaide: 23 October 2025

Conference theme: restoring forests and landscapes

- SA not endowed with large areas of tall timber producing trees
- From the 1860s, concern about over-clearing
- In 1870, a parliamentary “Return to order” motion
- In 1875, formation of Australia’s first forestry board – considered to be the date when forestry plantations began in Australia
- Trials began of hardwood and softwood species
- Two species shone out; radiata pine and Tasmanian blue gum
- This year marks 150 years of plantation forestry
- All speakers in this session were amongst the authors of our book *Evolution of the Forestry Industry in SA: 1975-2025*

Evolution of the Forestry Industry in South Australia: 1975-2025

Editors: D.J.Geddes, D.B.Boomsma and M.G.Underdown



Session outline

- We will have 4 short introductory presentations:
- Mike Bleby: how past silvicultural strategies have shaped current practices in SA
- Pete Bulman: how revegetation technologies were developed and how our understanding of the limitations of the role of trees in sustainable farming became better understood
- Lew Parsons: the transition from manual felling and truck loading to low residue harvesting and today's highly mechanised operations
- Peter Zed: advances in timber processing, from green mill operations to modern automated systems producing engineered wood products
- Then open Q&A forum panel discussion
- Now to our first speaker, Mike Bleby



Mike Bleby, OAM

Mike's 40-year career in Woods and Forests and later ForestrySA spanned all aspects of forest operations in SA, across the South East, Mid North and Mount Lofty Ranges regions.

He was District Forester at Mount Crawford (in the Mount Lofty Ranges) and Mount Burr (in the South East) during extensive replanting of the 1983 Ash Wednesday fire area.

Subsequently he worked in Operations Development, then Harvesting and Sales in the South East.

He has lectured in forestry for Southern Cross University, and served on the South East Natural Resources Management Board and the SE Water Conservation and Drainage Board

Mike is a writer of forestry memoirs and is a Fellow of Forestry Australia.

Peter Bulman

After time in pine plantation management with Woods & Forests in the South East region, Peter moved to Murray Bridge to manage the Monarto Tree Planting Project.

Later, he managed the Native Plant Section. His significant publications include *Farm Revegetation Design*, *Farmtree\$ for the Mount Lofty Ranges* and *Growing Broom Bush*.

Since 1993, he has promoted the profession via the Foresters Forest, a voluntary community-based urban forest in Adelaide. One of the conference tours tomorrow is to the Foresters Forest.

His business, Farm Tree Systems, provided a range of tree related services.

In retirement, he is still enjoying his 42-ha radiata pine tree farm, *Bracken Ridge*, located in the southern Mount Lofty Ranges.

Pete is a Fellow of Forestry Australia.

Lew Parsons

Lew is a Director of Wokurna Forestry, a forestry consulting company based in Mount Gambier which specialises in harvesting management, forest utilisation and marketing. Customers include harvesting contractors, forest owners and wood processors.

Prior to 2006, Lew worked for Woods and Forests and then ForestrySA, where he managed harvesting and marketing operations for 20 years.

He has served on several forestry boards, including the Logging Industry Training Association.

He is a current member (and Treasurer) of Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast, assisting businesses with funding opportunities, supporting workforce development and encouraging investment.

Peter Zed

Peter started his career with Woods and Forests in forestry research.

After several years of forestry management with Fiji Pine, he moved back to Australia in senior executive roles with Softwood Holdings, CSR Timber Products, Weyerhaeuser and ATP.

In 2008, he established Omega Consulting, a business that works in the Australian and international forestry sector and focuses on forest and processing valuations, operational productivity, industrial restructuring and market development. Peter arguably has the most comprehensive database of log volumes processed by Australian sawmills and also log and woodchip exports.

Peter has worked on forestry projects throughout Oceania, Asia, Africa and North America.