

David Belton



To: Natural Resources Commission

To whom it may concern:

I, David Belton, am the owner of Colligen Creek Firewood Supplies, based in Deniliquin NSW.

I have owned and operated the Business since 1987 (22 years). We are solely a firewood merchant selling into the local and Melbourne markets. We process 3000 to 3500 tonnes of red gum firewood annually. All the red gum is collected under strict guidelines from the New South Wales State Forest. I have a very strong relationship with the New South Wales State Forestry and adhere to all the financial commitments and OHS policies required to operate within the forest. The health and wellbeing of the forest is of utmost importance to my business, and sustainability is something that our industry relies on. I believe that the logging and firewood collection practices in use at the present time are sustainable. Without a logging industry there can be no firewood industry.

There are six contractors (cutters) directly involved with my business. All the contractors are local residents and are reliant on the firewood industry for their livelihood. The contractors are basically labourers or in the business of selling their labour. If the Government in their wisdom decide to close the forest to logging and firewood collection, all six of the contractors including myself would be out of a job as there are few employment opportunities for unskilled labour in the region.

The Riverina and particularly Deniliquin, is in the midst of a prolonged drought. This has already created significant unemployment and hardship within the community. Further jobs losses will exacerbate the problem and I'm sure will see most of us, if not all of us, having to relocate to where there maybe some employment.

Colligen Creek Firewood Supplies supports many small businesses in Deniliquin, from the chainsaw repair man to the fuel merchant to engineer and mechanic. We also make donations on an annual basis to groups such the Local Snr and Jnr Football Clubs, The Kindergarten, Pony Club, Rodeo Club and Ute Muster.

Yours sincerely

David Belton