

Forests' Assessment
National Resources Commission
GPO Box 4206
Sydney NSW 2001

10th October 2009

Attention: Natural Resources Commission

Re: Riverina Red Gum Forests

Dear Members,

As landholders and farmers within the Southern Riverina, my son and I are acutely aware of the importance the Red Gum Forests hold within the total environment. Our property abuts both the Colligen and Tumudgery Creeks. Both are fed from the Edward River. The Colligen Creek also extends into the Neimur River which ultimately flows back into the Edward River. This whole river/creek system is surrounded by Red Gum forests and is filled with an amazing variety of flora and fauna.

As my son is a fifth generation farmer we are very familiar with the Southern Riverina. We regard ourselves and our farming practices as part of the total environment that we sustain and preserve for future generations. We continuously strive towards sustainable farming that will involve a future with less water through climate change.

By the end of 2009 we plan to be using a fodder production system that uses only two to three litres of water to produce one kilogram of green matter, (sprouted barley grass). Conventional growing methods can require approximately 80 litres of water for the same return. This set up is costly but effective.

As farmers we also need to have assurance that investment in such infrastructure is worthwhile and there is a viable future for the next generation of Australian farmers.

Also as a teacher of Environmental Science I have had a very particular interest in assisting young people to understand and respect the forests, waterways, soils, flora, fauna and sustainable farming practices.

This teaching area has brought me into close contact with Forests NSW and Gulpa Sawmill, both located at Deniliquin. With organized excursions to both places, it has proved to be a revelation to the students how precisely Gulpa Sawmill is organized and regulated by Forests NSW. There is no incidental or unaccounted cutting within the forests by the sawmill. Every nominated tree is assessed and marked on a plan by Forests NSW and strictly adhered to by Gulpa Sawmill. Every part of each selected tree is accounted for and used.

Through class work we have charted the flow from the selection of trees through logging, transport, milling to end products. We have looked at numbers of employees and both the employers and employees contribution to our local community and the wider region.

We have also looked at changes over the decades in both the structures, charters and business management of both Forests NSW and our local Gulpa Sawmill. The students have had the opportunity to learn the importance of cooperation and mutual benefits, with a government agency (Forests NSW) and a sustainable locally based industry (Gulpa Sawmill).

As a community we are proud of our forest heritage and certainly look to both accountability and sustainability. As a community, both urban and rural, we are not looking to have our forests locked away with little management. Forests quickly become fire hazards as has been demonstrated elsewhere where forest activities and sustainable management practices have been excluded.

Our town of Deniliquin has suffered considerable losses with the closure of two major employers, the rice mill (largest in the southern hemisphere) and the abattoirs located at Deniliquin.

Many residents are now fearful that the Gulpa Sawmill which has had a long proven history of steady employment through generations of families (and is the final major area of employment) may be in jeopardy through legislative changes involving the Red Gum Forests.

Yet it is this very employer that has invested heavily in advanced infrastructure for value adding to remain a viable and sustainable operation, despite a loss of cutting quota. Many of our Environmental Science students have remarked on the innovative approaches this particular mill has taken to remain profitable and sustainable.

We welcome this opportunity to be involved through a submission to this important inquiry. This submission is made also on behalf of our students, as the next generation living in this diverse and beautiful region.

We urge the Commissioners to look closely at the whole relationship between our magnificent forests, water availability, sustainability, best farming practices, urban and rural employment, community involvement and future generations who will enjoy our forests and wetlands, through work and leisure.

As part of the total environment, this community is proud to contribute to a rich, diverse and sustainable future.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary and Nicholas Chernov