

Red Gum Commission Review

Dear NRC,

We are a small sawmilling business living working and protecting our local forests.

Our beginning :-

Chris developed a love of the bush from a very young age. Working with his father as a small boy was all he wanted to do. By the time he turned 12 he was doing the job of an adult man including driving trucks and other heavy machinery. Sent to Melbourne at the age of 16 to learn the trade of boiler making, Chris would get home any way he could of a weekend to work in and enjoy the forest.

At the end of completing the apprenticeship he had enough money saved to buy a second hand swing saw, borrowed his uncle's tractor and rebuilt a chainsaw from bits and pieces he had in his father's shed. There was never any doubt what career path he would take. Timber cutting was never just a way of earning a living - it was his life.

After struggling for a few years working long hours 7 days a week, camping away from home for many years and working alone, Chris decided to purchase a portable sawmill. This was a big step as he was then married with 2 small children. Chris worked hard and built up the business.

The opportunity arose to buy some woodturning equipment and so started his self education of kiln drying red gum timber. Chris built his own kiln and starting drying timber with varied success. He made dining room tables, coffee tables and many turned articles which we still use today. He can still tell today what part of the forest the timber came from.

Present:-

Our timber allocation from State Forest is 1500m3 Ex Quota log

We contract harvest and haul for 4 other licensed contractors on State Forest.

Process and split Firewood allocation 3300 tonne

Employ 7 full time staff.

We now operate a solar power kiln which is connected to a computer to enable us to monitor the temperature and humidity which we built ourselves. We supply KD red gum boards and slabs to cabinet makers and furniture makers locally and Melbourne and have exported to Ireland. Other products include –

Railway sleepers

Post and rail fencing

Landscape timber

Firewood

Chips & Sawdust

Every part of the log is utilized thus creating more employment and value adding to the log.

The recovery rate has increased as a result of more efficient sawmilling equipment and knowledge of grading logs.

Future

Resource security would give us the opportunity to employ more people to develop and value add to all sections of our business.

We would like to expand our kiln drying and dressing plant. Another Kiln and drying sheds for a start. Also we have had plans to build a show room at our mill site on Picnic Point Rd where thousands of tourist pass each year and to enable furniture makers to display their work. There is also a market for hobby wood turners who like to purchase short lengths of dressed timber.

Our first concern is the long term health of the forest. I have no doubt that a National Park would be detrimental to the red gum forest – a well managed resource that has stood the test of time could be destroyed along with the township and communities surrounding.

Why should we continue producing products Red Gum?

- Red gum timber is known to be an excellent regenerating species – it is rot resistant and extremely durable making it a long lasting sort after choice for bench tops and furniture.
- We are concerned that more restrictions on our forests will encourage timber products of an inferior quality to be imported from other countries with little or no sustainable management plans.
- Fire risk – clearing of debris from access roads by forestry staff and timber workers in forest keep them clear in case emergency vehicle need to enter. As we listened to in horror some stories told by the survivors from black Saturday in Victoria – many roads were blocked by falling trees – several of these trees were said to have been denied permission to be removed in recent time before the fires.

Our town and community

Local people especially timber workers don't often document what they see in their every day travels of the forest but many including ourselves have rescued, reared and assisted numerous native animals – we are here every day – we know the bush tracks without maps and signs which enables us to see much more than the average person holidaying here for a few days. These acts are just carried out as part of our every day to day living. We feel passionately about our surroundings and look after it and its inhabitant if it was our own. On our own property just before our house was build it was suggested we remove an old tree as it would impact on our garden and limbs may fall near the house. Chris noticed a pair of black shouldered kites nesting in the tree – the tree is still standing 5 yrs later and every year the birds return. That is why we feel so angry and frustrated when told by members of the National Parks Assoc. on their "visit" here a few months ago "You people only use the forest for you own financial gain"

Over the years we have supplied the town with most of the red gum timber used in projects such as-

Main street gardens, Business Information Centre benches and wood panelling, Bird Observatory, Picnic Point retaining walls, Cranes bridge restoration, cystic fibroses actions, football club trophies and awards, school children wood working projects and numerous other raffle prizes.

Employment security is vital to our tiny town. With the recent drought impacting on not only farmers in the area but all the local shops and small businesses, another industry to close could see the final nail in the coffin of our award winning town.

Quote from Patrick Moore co-founder of Greenpeace Washington Times Jan 2006 "One of the best ways to address climate change is to use more wood not less. Wood is simply the most abundant, biodegradable and reusable material on the planet".

Chris and Dawn Crump.