



Timber Towns Victoria

Submission to the Garnaut Review

Issues Paper 1, Climate Change: Land Use – Agriculture and Forestry

January 2008

Introduction

Timber Towns Victoria (TTV) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Garnaut Review Issues Paper 1: *Land Use – Agriculture and Forestry*.

TTV is the peak body for Victorian local government on forestry policy and development. It is an incorporated local government association representing the interests of municipal councils in relation to forestry on both public and private land. Established in 1985, the Association's primary function is to provide a forum for local government to address the management of forests and forest industries and their impact on local government and the community.

While this submission highlights a number of common concerns for TTV members, the Association acknowledges some member councils may pursue their local issues independently.

Carbon Sequestration Forestry

The Prime Ministerial Taskforce Group on Emissions Trading report, released on 1 June 2007 recognises the positive role forests as carbon sinks have in mitigating the effects of climate change. With the Commonwealth providing tax incentives for investment in private forestry and the potential role of forestry offsets in a national emissions trading scheme, local government is concerned about the financial burden the amplified growth of plantations may have on rural councils.

TTV recognises the significant role private forestry will play in providing Australia with a sustainable supply of timber products into the future and the economic contribution the industry makes to many regional communities. However, many rural municipalities are apprehensive about harvesting controls that may be placed on carbon sequestering plantations part of a national scheme. Of particular concern is the social and economic impact of non-harvestable plantations on rural communities as the employment opportunities associated with these types of plantations are minimal.

In Victoria, local government is responsible for ensuring plantation development is conducted in compliance with the Code of Practice for Timber Production and maintaining safe local road infrastructure for timber haulage. Victoria has the largest plantation base in Australia with 395,700 hectares of trees. With current predictions stating the plantation sector will establish new trees at a rate of 75,000 hectares per year, the ability for local government to provide appropriate resources and conditions for plantation development are and will continue to be strained.

Local Fee for Trees

TTV raises for consideration a remuneration system for municipalities which permit non-harvestable carbon sequestering plantations part of a national scheme within their boundaries. The pricing of carbon credits part of a national scheme which includes forestry could incorporate costs associated with the impact of construction (and potential harvesting) of carbon

sequestering plantations on local government infrastructure, providing councils with a funding stream to repair damages as necessary. Alternatively, companies who establish carbon sequestering plantations could be required to pay municipalities expenses for works needed to create or repair local government infrastructure associated with construction.

Carbon Sequestering Wood Products

TTV supports further research into the storage of carbon in wood products post harvest. Whilst burning and decomposing wood releases carbon into the atmosphere, harvested wood products used for building materials, paper and furniture store carbon. Additionally, wood products typically require less energy to make than alternative materials. Recognition of the carbon stored in wood products could potentially influence harvesting controls placed on plantations part of a national emissions trading scheme. If carbon sequestering plantations were permitted for harvest based on the carbon storage benefits of wood materials post harvest, such plantations could provide improved socio-economic outcomes for rural communities and reduce the need for remuneration to councils.

Conclusion

Both public and private forests as carbon sinks play an important role in mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration. The combined benefits of carbon sequestration in growing trees and carbon storage in wood products would be supported as valuable components of a national emissions trading scheme.

The inclusion of forestry in a national scheme and the existing expansion of plantations are expected to have a dramatic effect on local government infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. TTV is concerned local government will be overlooked in the development stages of a national scheme which includes forestry, as it was not consulted during the development of the Federal Government policy *Plantations for Australia: The Vision 2020*, created in 1997 (revised in 2001) which aims to treble the Australian plantation resource by 2020. Consequently, TTV requests the Commonwealth and Victorian Government engage and consult with local government in the development and delivery of policy for a national scheme which comprises forestry.

Contact

TTV would like to be considered for any further public consultation processes during the review period.

For further information please contact Simone Stuckey, TTV Coordinator, [sstuckey@mav.asn.au](mailto:ssuckey@mav.asn.au) or 03 9667 5582.

Signed on behalf of Timber Towns Victoria



Cr Malcolm Hole
President



Simone Stuckey
Coordinator