

Tumut: Is a Growing Concern

Australian Government Reports

“*Socioeconomic Impacts of Plantation Forestry in the South West Slopes (NSW)*” and “*Socioeconomic Impacts of Plantation Forestry*” are two publications produced by the Australian Government (Forest and Wood Products Research Corporation) Bureau of Rural Sciences.

These two publications put forward a strong statistical and economic argument asserting that the South West Slopes of NSW (and Tumut in particular) is set for a bright future. A future that reverses the trend in many agriculturally based rural regions.

The key points are:-

- A number of changes occurred in the SWS over the past two decades, one of which was the continued expansion of the plantation industry.
- A large scale, mature plantation industry has developed in the South West Slopes since the 1920s, and continues to expand.
- In 2003-04, the management, harvesting and processing of SWS plantations directly generated 1680 jobs. An estimated further 3250 jobs were indirectly generated.
- More than 90% of direct employment generated by management, harvesting and processing of SWS plantations is based in the region.
- The value of output produced per hectare rose from \$4270 in 1993-94 to \$5334 in 2002-03.
- Small towns with high levels of plantation sector employment experienced higher overall population growth, stronger growth in working age population, and more consistent growth in household income over 1996 to 2001 than other small towns in the region.
- Expansion of processing facilities led to higher numbers of new residents shifting to some parts of the region over the period from 1996 to 2001.
- The presence of a mature plantation industry in the SWS has been associated with higher than average growth in working age population and stable household income, both of which are good indicators for ongoing economic and population growth.
- It is important to plan ahead for the training, residential housing, transport, and community infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing plantation industry.
- With an increased diversification of its economic structure, and the stability afforded by having a strong manufacturing base, Tumut is now better able to withstand other detrimental forces e.g. exceptional droughts.

These two publications have been included in this kit for your information



Cutting Edge Technology Used to Control Pollution

As well as being attractive to manufacturing industries, the district is also a prime target for investors in the tourism, retirement and recreational industries following major advancements in pollution control in the Tumut Valley. Previously, the Tumut Valley was subject to trapped smoke emissions from industrial plants on the north western edge of the town's boundary. The installation of a wet electrostatic precipitator (WESP) at one plant, and changes to the management of other manufacturing operations, has resulted in greatly improved air quality. These changes were brought about following a community consultation process. The WESP was the first to be installed on wood chip dryers in Australia

New Business Opportunities Created (Tourism, Recreation, Retirement, Tree Change)

The natural beauty of the area is outstanding. The topography ranges from snow-capped mountains of the national parks to open undulating farming country and pine forests, with two major dams and fast flowing rivers well stocked with fish. It is evident from the number of recent applications for developments in the tourism, recreation and retirement sectors that a trend towards strong economic growth is now (in 2006) occurring.

Growth Jeopardised by Deficient Infrastructure (Old Hospital)

All of the economic development of the past decade and prospective development in the immediate future, however, could be placed in jeopardy because of an inadequate health service. In the words of Chairman of the Forests Industry Council, who wrote to the authors of this report in June 2006,

“Experience has shown that for families to move and stay here, there are certain key requirements. These include: adequate hospital and health facilities..... The quality of hospital and health services in Tumut is therefore seen to be fundamental to the ongoing success of the timber industry.”

Two applications for retirement villages with a total of 69 units were lodged with Tumut Council mid 2006. A third retirement complex is still being planned and yet a fourth has been lodged for units in Batlow. All of these developments require access to a modern, well equipped hospital with a range of health services appropriate for retirees. In its present state, Tumut Hospital and the Tumut Health Service do not meet the standards required to sustain these enterprises adequately.

Overall, a review of the Tumut Health Service is urgently required to allow for these trends. Commitment to the construction of a new hospital in the immediate future will be critical to the stability and sustained growth of the Tumut Shire's economy.



Photographs by Brian Rosetta & Peter Wilson.

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