

CASE STUDY: Plantation Tours for Local Government

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:

Multiple, Tasmania

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED:

- Andy Warner, Regional Private Forester, Private Forests Tasmania

What happened?

In 2001 plantation expansion was increasing on cleared agricultural land in Tasmania. Local councils were hearing the concerns of rural landowners, but did not necessarily understand what was happening with plantation expansion or why.

Private Forests Tasmania considered that it was essential to help councils to understand why change was occurring and what the implications and opportunities would be. They invited councils in the areas of major plantation expansion to participate in information sessions that involved an overview Powerpoint presentation followed by a field inspection of sites of relevance or concern regarding plantation development in the municipality.

Some 15 information sessions were run with a range of councils throughout Tasmania – most councils that had major plantation areas responded to the original invitation and a few had more than one presentation over the next year or so. The tours were conducted through to late 2003. Presentations were customised for each municipality.

More recently there has been increased interest in general forestry issues e.g. road maintenance by councils in rural areas and there is some support to use the same format and expand the topic to forestry generally rather than just plantations – often the issues from a council viewpoint are hard to separate into plantation and native forests e.g. log trucks on roads etc.

On behalf of Private Forests Tasmania, Andy Warner acted as the facilitator for the information tour sessions. Prior to the sessions Andy spoke with the council staff and aldermen to identify what concerns they had re plantations and also with the major plantation growers involved in that specific municipality (usually about 3 or 4 of the 5 major players) and ensured that issues raised from all perspectives were addressed. There was very strong support for this process by all the organisations involved in plantation development in Tasmania.

“The format was a one hour Powerpoint presentation that I ran giving an overview of plantations and providing some context for the relevance of tree growing to Tasmania and also to the specific municipality/region and also covering a few issues that had media exposure at the time. We then got in a minibus and went for a drive for about 4 hours including a sandwich lunch stop. The plantation companies in each municipality had their senior representatives involved, so we got definite feedback on the day if there were any issues. The events worked well to improve communication between the companies and the councils and helped to improve the understanding by both sides of issues.”

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"Last year I did send another information tour invitation out to a few councils that had declined earlier due to a busy schedule, but I have not had any more interest expressed by the councils as I think there is now more effective communication and a better base knowledge of the industry, although it is important to maintain the sharing of information as new local government representatives are elected and new senior staff are appointed," said Andy.

"The tours served a very important role at the time."

The consultative committee for councils and forestry has also helped – the Local Government Forestry Consultative Committee. It is another acknowledged excellent development in the communication process.

Access information about the Local Government Forestry Consultative Committee <http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=367>