NORTHSIDE TRUSSES & FRAMES

A Division of Colonial
Timber Products
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Licenced Mitek Fabricator

FIAC Secretariat
Forestry Branch
Department of Agriculture
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RE: Submission in response to "Meeting future market demand - Australia's forest products and forest industry."

I outline our comments below regarding the issues paper

1. Overview

Colonial Timber Products Pty. Ltd. T/A Northside Trusses and Frames, is a large truss and frame manufacturer based in South East Queensland. We have been in operation for over 32 years and currently employ 130 people, we consume between 2,500 – 3,000m3 of timber per month. Our focus is on the plantation based softwood resource but we do use some hardwood.

2. Scope of paper

We have concern about the scope of the document as it appears to stop analysis before the manufacturing and merchants sector. The manufacturing and merchants sector, in which we include, general hardware/timber merchants, truss and frame, re-saw operations, pallet and furniture makers etc. This sector employs the most people within the forest products industry and we believe consumes the most sawn timber. It is also the sector that influences the end user on what product to use and where. From a supply chain analysis this sector must be included rather than isolated. While this sector doesn't fund the FWPA research process it is in this area that research is needed.

Some examples:

- The need to include nogging in wall frames, limits the options and makes it more complex to manufacture pre-nailed (made) wall frames.
- Domestic housing often includes steel beams this brings an extra step in the builders process to quote a job. If there was a process to quote steel or have

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timber based products for these critical load bearing members a time saving could be in the construction process at a critical time.

- Utilisation of H2 treated by-products; we need approval to consume for energy.
- 70 mm framing still dominates the Queensland market; there are benefits along the supply chain to move to 90mm.
- Whole of house termite protection increases the cost of a treated timber frame option.
- From a domestic housing point of view we have lost the markets of fascia (losing the structural advantages of timber), roof battens and temporary posts etc. Our industry doesn't have the innovative capacity to develop and market new products but rather sits back while market is lost. Markets in fencing, retaining walls and decking are slowly fading.

Question 1 & 2 – The vision has to include the repositioning of the industry- we store carbon, employ regionally and provide high tech career paths. The objective is to get timber to be seen as the only valid environmental product for construction.

Question 3 - 6

We need to understand where the timber is used and in what products any short supply is appearing, before deciding what action is to be taken. If it is in the stud market for domestic housing, do local suppliers want to be involved in meeting the gap?

Question 7 - 8

I refer back to my earlier comment. While I support the emerging products I think focus should also be on volume markets like domestic housing. There is still significant potential to utilise more timber products and improve the affordability of housing. More focus should be placed on innovative manufacturing processes as well as products. We were fortunate to gain a grant under the Forest Industries Development Fund. This provided us with funding to assist a project that improved our productivity by around 30% in manufacturing pre-nailed frames. This type of assistance supports us to take on the risk of innovation.

From a sawmilling point of view there is additional scope to improve quality – some companies are doing this, producing more reliable studs. But areas like consistent tolerance between manufacturers would assist us in having consistent thickness of product e.g. noggs being proud of studs is an issue.

Moisture take up in LVL is also an issue that needs to be resolved.

Question 10 - 12

A significant part of this issue is related to the communities perception of forestry. The community should insist the plantation estate does not diminish but rather expands because of the benefit to the environment.

For hardwood there are issues of regional constraints being applied to hardwood harvesting and haulage but not to other products such as carting stock.

There needs to be a higher weighting of the impact on the community in regard to the environmental decisions. We are happy to say that a different attitude should apply to a Pacific Island community compared with an Australian community. The possible impact on the environment of harvesting trees must be balanced against the impact of the lost jobs and damage done to local communities. Some Tasmanian towns have suffered dramatically from the cessation of tree harvesting causing long term community impact.

Long term legitimacy to harvesting private forests also needs to be gained.

Question 13 - 15

Probably covered this in 7- 8. The focus tends to be growing and primary processing. We need to be able to produce affordable housing. This is not isolated to composites. The better use of solid and finger jointed product for housing needs to be further investigated.

Question 16 - 18

Social media must be extensively used but also as employees and businesses operating within the industry we have to engage local groups to push the message. Open up manufacturing facilities to let the students, teachers and general community understand what we do.

Question 19 - 21

Forestry hubs like Timber Queensland have demonstrated value to the industry. Breaking down the silos within groups and between groups is extremely difficult and has not progressed. The use of hubs must be both regional across industries and intra-industry. The opportunities are massive e.g. we have just installed solar panels that are only utilized 5 out of 7 days, this surplus energy could be used for chipping or other processing of by-product at significant savings.

The trust factor is the biggest issue for hubs success; this can only be gained through professional Facilitation.

Question 22 - 23

Regionally one of the biggest issues is restraint on haulage options to minimize cost to mill door.

Question 24 - 26

Industry skills and training needs to be set in an appropriate environment before it can go forward. We need to ensure that:

- The community is educated about the legitimacy of forestry,
- That teachers, educators and trainers understand the industry and the opportunities.
- That the appropriate units and courses are available and that they are relevant to the industry needs and
- That jobs are available once people are trained

If all 4 of these points are achieved then training is a waste of time.

The relevancy of national qualifications and the process required to change these, is currently unacceptable. As an industry we need to have people who care about the training outcome to decide the way forward for training.

The Timber Industry Award must be made relevant to the industry needs, it currently isn't.

Standard industry job descriptions and job titles would assist in recruitment.

Conclusion

In comparing timber to the steel industry, we don't have a unified voice and we don't understand the benefits of uniting to form common marketing groups. We continue to view the industry by segment to maximize individual stakeholder's positions rather than a supply chain attempting to provide end user satisfaction. Ultimately it is the consumer who will decide the future; it is up to the industry to educate them on the clear environmental benefits of timber.

Yours sincerely
Northside Trusses and Frames
[redacted]
Chris Hay
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