

# 6. CHAPTER SIX :

## FOREST USER PROFILE

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The forest user profile provides some insight into the demographic features of those people who are highly dependent on forests for their livelihood. The profile also highlights some of the key issues for this group of people. Forest users for the purpose of this chapter include:

- timber processing workers
- forest logging contractors
- apiarists
- graziers
- flora collectors
- DPI Forestry staff.

### 6.2 FOREST USER PROFILE

Table 6.1 provides the profiles of various forest users including employees of the timber industry, forest contractors, apiarists and graziers. The profiles for timber processing industry employees and forest contractors are based on large sample counts and would reasonably reflect the population characteristics of employees within each of these industry groups. The employee profile of apiarists and graziers are based on smaller sample sizes and as such some caution is required when interpreting these profiles.

In general, the employee profiles for timber processing industry employees and forest contractor employees are reasonably similar. The most significant difference between the two groups was in relation to home ownership, where a large percentage of timber processing industry employees rented their home when compared to forest industry contractors. Such figures may be indicative of a perceived lack of stability in the timber industry which might account for a reluctance to invest in real estate.

An examination of the employee profiles across the four industry groups shows the average age of timber processing and forest contractors to be 37 years and 39 years respectively, with the average age of apiarists being 48 years and the average age of graziers being 54 years. Older forest users are perhaps more vulnerable to changes than younger people who may have better prospects if they had to retrain or find employment elsewhere.

Of particular interest is that approximately 50 percent of apiarists were employed part-time in their business, working an average of 20 hours per week. This is in comparison to timber processing industry employees where 11 percent were employed part time and where only six percent of forest contractor employees were employed part-time.

Timber processing industry and forest contractor employees had worked for their current business for approximately ten years, while apiarists had worked for their business for approximately 15 years and graziers 30 years. These figures indicate that most forest users view their occupation as being a long-term activity.

Forty percent of timber industry and forest contractor employees were found to have left school at year ten, with 12 percent of industry employees and 10% of contractor employees also having left school at year nine. Relatively low levels of education can contribute to a lower capacity to adapt to change in employment.

Amongst timber processing industry and forest contractor employees, 17 percent and 18 percent respectively had previously had to move town to retain their employment within the industry, with the majority of those who had moved having done so on two previous occasions.

In relation to the employment status of the partner of those surveyed, 60 percent of timber industry employees had a partner in employment, with 35 percent of partners being in full time employment and 25 percent being in part time employment. Amongst these employees, 25 percent of employees had partners who worked in the same industry as themselves.

Across all forest industries the mean family size was approximately three, with the majority of employees having either 'most' or 'all' family members living in the same town as the employee. It is evident that the social networks for many of these people are closely correlated with the town community.

An analysis of the lifecycle age profiles shows that amongst timber industry and forest contractor employees the majority were young to middle age families with a high percentage of primary school aged children. In contrast apiarists had a large percentage of pre-retirement families, while graziers had a high percentage of pre-retirement and elderly families.

Table 5.1 shows the mean forest value scores for each of the four values and belief dimensions for the general population, which have been reported in the Social Values chapter (Ch.3). As might be expected, the general population reports higher levels of intrinsic value than is evident across all forest industry employees, while forest industry employees report, again as might be expected, significantly higher levels of extrinsic use values. Forest industry employees also report higher dependency of their town or area on the timber industry when compared to respondents from the general population.

Table 5.1 also shows that across all forest industry employees the most preferred characteristics about the town or area in which they lived were that they liked the 'people who lived there' and the 'lifestyle'. This data reinforces the importance of local culture and locally based social networks to forest users.

The following text boxes provide a brief overview of some of the key characteristics of apiarists, graziers, timber processors and forest contractors.

Flora collectors and DPI- Forestry staff were not specifically dealt with in Table 5.1. Their particular concerns will be dealt with below.

Flora collectors are highly dependent on the resources presently found in State forests. Flora collectors seek to use ecologically sustainable foliage harvesting methods to manage flora resources. Up to 80 percent of the flora collected is taken from State forests and as such, flora collectors are reliant upon access to state forests in order to ensure that their employment is secure.

### APIARISTS' PROFILE

- The average age of apiarists surveyed was 47 years
- The average number of years that apiarists have worked in the industry sector is 19 years
- 20% of apiarists have moved town to retain employment in the industry
- 55.5% of apiarists left school at or below age 15.
- 47.8% have partners who work in the same industry
- The average number of children in an apiarists' family is 3
- 46.4% of apiarists have all of their family living in the same town as they do
- 30.5% of apiarists' families fit into the pre-retirement age bracket
- 48.1% of apiarists indicated that most of their friends live in the same town as they do

### GRAZIERS' PROFILE

- The average age of graziers surveyed is 54 years
- The average number of years that graziers have worked in the industry sector is 31 years
- 69.3% of graziers left School at or below age 15.
- 85.7% have partners who work in the same industry
- The average number of children in a graziers' family is 3
- 23.1% indicated that all their family lives in the same town as they do
- 34.2% have "pre-retirement" or "elderly" families
- 66.7% indicated that most of their friends live in the same town as they do

### TIMBER PROCESSING WORKERS' PROFILE

- The average age of timber workers is 37 years
- The average number of years that timber workers have worked in the industry sector is 12 and a half years
- 16.6% of timber workers have moved town to retain employment in the industry sector
- 65.1% of timber workers left school at or below age 15.
- 24.7% of workers have partners working in the same industry The average number of children in a timber workers' family is 3
- 34.5% have all their family living in the same town
- 29.9% have families in the young to middle families bracket with a high percentage of primary school aged children
- 48.3% indicated that most of their friends live in the same town as the worker
- The average wage for a timber mill worker is \$23,700.00 (Economic Survey of Log processing facilities in the South-East Region of Queensland, 1998)

### FOREST CONTRACTORS' PROFILE

- The average age of forest contractors is 39 years
- The average number of years that forest contractors have worked in the industry sector is 13 and a half years
- 18.1% of forest contractors have moved towns to retain employment in the industry
- 19.4% have partners who work in the same industry
- 63.7% of forest contractors left school at or below age 15.
- The average number of children in a forest contractors' family is 3
- 29.9% have all their family living in the same town as they do
- 27.5% have families in the young to middle families bracket with a high percentage of primary school aged children
- 48.8% indicated that most of their friends live in the same town as they do

The Department of Primary Industries-Forestry employ a number of staff who are directly or partly involved in managing and administering the native forest estate on behalf of the State Government. The public sector staff potentially effected by the SEQ RFA must be considered in the social assessment for the SEQ RFA. The *Post Impact Studies Analysis Report (SE5.1)* found that the different treatment of private and public sector employees similarly affected by changes in State forest use can contribute to employee stress and conflict within employee groups and communities.

**TABLE 6.1. PROFILE OF FOREST INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES**

| Characteristics  | Timber Processing | Forest Contractors | Apiarists | Graziers |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
| <b>Sample Size</b>   | 352               | 207                | 29        | 15       |
| Mean age of employee   | 37.2              | 38.7               | 47.8      | 54.1     |
| Percent males  | 85.7              | 85.9               | 92.3      | 83.3     |
| Percent females  | 14.3              | 14.1               | 7.7       | 16.7     |
| <b>Employment</b>  |                   |                    |           |          |
| Percent full employment                                      | 89.4              | 94.5               | 53.6      | 78.6     |
| Percent part time employment                                 | 10.6              | 5.5                | 46.4      | 14.3     |
| Mean hours per week worked                                   | 28.6              | 34.5               | 20.2      | 12.5     |
| Mean number of years working for current business            | 9.5               | 9.5                | 14.8      | 29.6     |
| Mean number of years working in industry sector              | 12.6              | 13.6               | 19.1      | 31.1     |
| Percent who have only worked in current industry sector      | 61.2              | 59.1               | 56.0      | 54.5     |
| Percent who have moved town to retain employment in industry | 16.6              | 18.1               | 20.0      | 0.0      |
| Median number of town moves to retain employment in industry | 2.0               | 2.2                | 1.0       | 0.0      |
| <b>Home Ownership Characteristics</b>                        |                   |                    |           |          |
| Mean number of years resident in current town                | 21.4              | 20.9               | 26.4      | 34.2     |
| Home Ownership ( <i>percent</i> )                            |                   |                    |           |          |

|  |      |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Rent home  | 44.6 | 32.7 | 14.8 | 8.3  |
| Own the home   | 24.3 | 34.2 | 70.4 | 83.3 |
| Have a mortgage  | 31.1 | 33.2 | 14.8 | 8.3  |
| <b>Highest Level of Education (percent)</b>                      |      |      |      |      |
| Primary School   | 6.5  | 7.5  | 25.9 | 15.4 |
| Year 8   | 7.1  | 7.0  | 3.7  | 7.7  |
| Year 9   | 12.4 | 10.9 | 3.7  | 7.7  |
| Year 10  | 39.1 | 38.3 | 22.2 | 38.5 |
| Year 11  | 3.8  | 5.5  | 3.7  | 0.0  |
| Year 12  | 12.6 | 10.4 | 3.7  | 7.7  |
| Trade or TAFE certificate  | 14.1 | 13.9 | 14.8 | 15.4 |
| Degree or diploma  | 4.4  | 6.5  | 22.2 | 7.7  |
| <b>Marital Status (percent)</b>                                  |      |      |      |      |
| Married or Defacto   | 70.8 | 76.4 | 75.0 | 85.7 |
| Single   | 29.2 | 23.6 | 25.0 | 14.3 |
| <b>Partner's Employment Characteristics (percent)</b>            |      |      |      |      |
| Full-time  | 35.0 | 32.9 | 27.3 | 30.0 |
| Part-time  | 24.5 | 31.6 | 40.9 | 10.0 |
| Not employed   | 40.5 | 35.5 | 31.8 | 50.0 |
| Percent with partner employed in same industry as employee       | 24.7 | 19.4 | 47.8 | 85.7 |
| <b>Family Characteristics</b>                                    |      |      |      |      |
| Mean family size   | 3.0  | 3.1  | 3.1  | 3.2  |
| Percent of employees indicating family in same town as employee  |      |      |      |      |
| None   | 10.3 | 10.3 | 7.1  | 23.1 |
| Some   | 27.3 | 29.4 | 21.4 | 23.1 |
| Most   | 27.9 | 30.4 | 25.0 | 30.8 |
| All  | 34.5 | 29.9 | 46.4 | 23.1 |
| <b>Lifecycle Age Profile (percent)</b>                           |      |      |      |      |
| 0-4 years (pre-school)   | 6.0  | 9.0  | 2.4  | 15.8 |
| 5-12 years (primary school)                                      | 13.9 | 15.8 | 11.0 | 13.2 |
| 13-17 years (high school)  | 8.1  | 10.5 | 13.4 | 2.6  |
| 18-24 years (young singles/couples)                              | 12.8 | 10.0 | 9.8  | 2.6  |
| 25-39 years (young/middle families)                              | 29.9 | 27.5 | 13.4 | 26.3 |
| 40-49 years (mature families)                                    | 16.4 | 14.9 | 14.6 | 5.3  |
| 50-64 years (pre-retirement)                                     | 11.1 | 10.0 | 30.5 | 15.8 |
| 65+ (elderly)  | 1.9  | 2.4  | 4.9  | 18.4 |
| <b>Recreation, Leisure and Other Social Activities</b>           |      |      |      |      |
| Number of community groups or organisations actively involved in | 2.2  | 2.1  | 2.2  | 3.6  |
| Percent of employees indicating friends in same town as employee |      |      |      |      |
| None   | 2.3  | 1.5  | 0.0  | 0.0  |

|      |      |      |      |      |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| Some | 37.4 | 40.0 | 29.6 | 33.3 |
| Most | 48.3 | 48.8 | 48.1 | 66.7 |
| All  | 12.1 | 9.8  | 22.2 | 0.0  |

#### Frequency of Visiting State Forests or National Parks (percent)

|                         |      |      |      |      |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Once a month or more    | 11.0 | 10.1 | 30.8 | 0.0  |
| Once every three months | 11.6 | 13.1 | 15.4 | 8.3  |
| Once every six months   | 13.1 | 12.6 | 7.7  | 25.0 |
| Once a year             | 9.6  | 12.6 | 3.8  | 0.0  |
| Never                   | 54.6 | 51.8 | 42.3 | 66.7 |

#### Forest Values (mean composite scores)<sup>1</sup>

|  |      |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Intrinsic Values (population mean = 1.76)                | 1.90 | 1.99 | 1.95 | 1.92 |
| Extrinsic Values (population mean = 2.42)                | 1.85 | 1.89 | 2.08 | 1.92 |
| Forest Management Concern (population mean = 2.00)       | 2.24 | 2.37 | 1.96 | 2.23 |
| Dependency on forest industries (population mean = 3.09) | 1.61 | 1.76 | 2.69 | 2.32 |

#### Preferred Characteristics of Employee Town or Area of Residence (percent)

|  |      |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| The people who live here                     | 64.7 | 54.5 | 53.8 | 58.3 |
| The lifestyle                                | 71.5 | 77.2 | 61.5 | 83.3 |
| The employment opportunities                 | 22.8 | 16.8 | 11.5 | 16.7 |
| Its isolation or remoteness                  | 17.8 | 14.9 | 19.2 | 8.3  |
| The scenic beauty of the area                | 33.8 | 40.6 | 42.3 | 66.7 |
| The quality of the environment               | 33.8 | 33.7 | 34.6 | 66.7 |
| The climate                                  | 38.6 | 51.0 | 53.8 | 66.7 |
| Its closeness to my work                     | 79.5 | 70.3 | 61.5 | 58.3 |
| Access to community services and facilities  | 33.5 | 33.7 | 53.8 | 75.0 |
| The availability of recreation opportunities | 32.9 | 33.2 | 23.1 | 25.0 |

Note: <sup>1</sup>Forest values are compared to population values as described in EBC (1998), *Social and Forest Values of the Community Within the South East Queensland RFA Region*.

Forest value scales are represented by (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) disagree and (4) strongly disagree.

Source: Fenton, M. EBC (1998).

What can be extrapolated from this information is that many forest users are highly sensitive to changes in forest use. The combined factors of relatively low levels of education (on average) and long periods working in the same job, (and hence, having a highly specific skills base), contribute to making the possibilities for employment in other sectors few. It is also known, from the work conducted as part of the Post-Impact Studies Analysis, that many forest contractors and mill managers are accustomed to being their own bosses and having a high degree of autonomy, and may therefore find transfer to other employment to be difficult.

Added to this, many forest users have strong social ties with their towns with the majority of their family and friends residing in the same towns. Many timber workers and contractors have school-aged children and from the PISA (SE 5.1) we know that this tends to make people reluctant to relocate.

The relocation of timber workers and their families may, particularly for some smaller towns, affect the viability of delivery of services including education.

Forest users also have significant financial ties to the area that they presently live in, where there may be few job opportunities outside of forest industries. As rural decline has progressed, fewer and fewer rural industries have survived or grown to a sufficient degree to have room for employing forest users made redundant. For several areas, forest industries are the last remaining significant viable industries. This is evidenced by the findings of the case study town workshops.

Although there is a high percentage of forest users who own their own home, mostly these people live in areas where land values are low when compared to the regional average (see the Regional Social Profile SE 5.2 for evidence). This means that forest users who choose to relocate have little chance of being able to purchase their own home in more built up areas where employment opportunities may be available, but where housing prices are significantly higher.

It is evident therefore, that if there were to be changes from the RFA which caused there to be a reduction in employment available to current forest users, this group of people would be seriously affected.

For further information see the technical report *SE 5.4 Business Dependency Survey*.