

20 April 2006

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Embargo until – 9.30 am Wed 19 April 2006**

### **Plantation impacts seminar well attended**

A well attended seminar held at Leongatha this morning and Sale this afternoon heard from the principal author of a report that investigated the socioeconomic impacts of the plantation forestry sector in two regions of Australia.

The Bureau of Rural Sciences report examined the plantation industry in the Great Southern region of Western Australia and the South West Slopes region of New South Wales. The report covers key land uses and industries in these case study regions and the history of plantation industry development.

Report author, Jacqui Schirmer, observed that plantation sector expansion is only one of the changes occurring in rural regions of Australia. The socioeconomic impacts of the plantation sector need to be understood in the context of this broader socioeconomic change. Many regions have experienced major socio-economic and land use change in recent decades, including farm amalgamation, declining rural population and services, and shifts in employment opportunities.

Ms Schirmer's presentation went on to discuss the level, type and location of employment and spending by the plantation sector over time, and the link between plantation sector expansion and changes in the socioeconomic characteristics of the population of different parts of the study regions.

Employment in the plantation sector of a region varies with the phase that the plantation industry is in, according to the report. The level of expenditure from the plantation sector and the value of output generated per hectare increase as a greater proportion of the plantation estate reaches maturity and becomes part of an ongoing harvest rotation. For example, the presence of a mature plantation in the South West Slopes 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.

The seminar also heard a presentation from Gippsland Private Forestry's Executive Officer, Rob Willersdorf, on the contribution of the timber industry, including the plantation sector, to the Gippsland region's economy.

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*Promoting sustainable, commercial private forestry development in Gippsland*