

# Long-term investment a ‘must’ for a sustainable industry to meet demand

IF feed-back was a meal, participants in a Queensland strategic forest industry review workshop on Monday enjoyed a banquet.

Response from the workshop run in Maryborough by the South and Central Queensland regional forestry hub “was incredible”, said hub manager Kerry Fullarton.

The workshop was the hub’s first step in engaging industry, bringing together 40 industry leaders. Priorities were identified and tasks allocated to the most suitable organisation.

Discussion centered on the \$775 million industry economic activity within the Wide Bay and Burnett region where wood processing and timber manufacturing accounts for about 70% of 11,760 direct timber industry jobs.

“There was a clear message that the timber industry must improve its advocacy, promotion and marketing – and its awareness and understanding of its contribution to the economy, jobs and career opportunities,” summed up workshop facilitator Scott Rowe, director, Regional Development Australia, Wide Bay and Burnett.

“There are real skills shortages impacting the industry and there needs to be better communication and collaboration with the education and vocational sector to close this gap,” he said.

Mr Rowe said lifting the industry’s profile and projecting career pathways in forestry and wood products



**Facilitator Scott Rowe, director, Regional Development Australia, Wide Bay and Burnett, welcomes participants at the South and Central Queensland regional forestry hub workshop in Maryborough this week.**

would clear any lack of understanding about the industry’s environmental and sustainability practices.

“Bioenergy is a real opportunity, but there needs to be co-investment in the infrastructure to support it,” he said.

The industry must advocate to government for the identification of land and large-scale opportunities for future timber plantations. There were also ongoing freight and transport issues that would impact the industry’s future viability and ability to compete with imports.

**“REAL SKILL SHORTAGES IMPACTING INDUSTRY”**

“There remains a lack of research and development around the hardwood industry,” Mr Rowe said.

“There is a great need for long-term investment for industry sustainability and

to meet growing demand [realising] there is a lack of certainty and attraction for investors.”

Mr Rowe said the

agriculture versus tree debate still raged for landowners; there seemed to be a bias from government towards agriculture.

“The timber industry must work hand-in-hand with farmers to better educate them about the resources on their land,” he said.

Hub members attending the workshop included Dave Gover, AKD, Sue Joseph, Bassett Barks Pty Ltd, Curley Tatnell, DTM Timber, Greg Phipps, EcoCottages, Steve Worley, HQPlantations, James Hyne, Hyne Timber (chair), Ross Lakin, Parkside, Mick Stephens, Timber Queensland and Clarissa Brandt, Timber Queensland (observer).

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