

WHOLE LOG EXPORTS DESTROYING JOBS



For the last few weeks travellers on the eastern side of the Queen's Domain would have noticed an enormous buildup of logs on Macquarie Wharf. The logs are native forest eucalypt between about 300 mm and 600 mm diameter - straight, clean and regular i.e. no knots or similar obvious bumps. These logs would have grown into perfect sawlogs for the highest value timber, given another 30 or 40 years. Instead, they have been cut down before their prime to be exported by Forestry Tasmania to make plywood in South Korea and China.

TWFF spokesman Graham Green said 'we are outraged that the timber industry has shed 4,000 jobs in the last decade yet we continue practices that are nothing more than exporting more Tasmanian jobs and exporting our future sawlog supply'. 'The Koreans must be in awe of our stupidity as they are poised to make a whole pile of cash from our premium hardwood logs'.

90,000 tonnes were exported last year, however Forestry Tasmania would not divulge how much would be exported in the current financial year but expected it would be higher. Forestry Tasmania would also not divulge the royalty rate that the logs were fetching, but conceded that they would have been pulped if not exported whole. 'We are baffled at Forestry Tasmania's lack of imagination when it comes to downstream processing – are they not aware that dozens of sawmills have shut down in the last decade' Mr Green said.

'As custodians of the State's forests, Forestry Tasmania owe it to Tasmanians to maximise the returns from our forests for Tasmanians now and in the future – it is offensive that our timber is being flogged off for a pittance now in order to prop up their shaky financial position. This is what you would expect in a third world country' Mr Green said.

During the Government Business Enterprise Scrutiny hearings on 18 February 2003, Forestry Tasmania's Managing Director Evan Rolley admitted boat-loads of logs will be exported from all three of Tasmania's major ports for the next couple of years'. He claimed that the logs were being exported to Korea to help develop a market for hardwood veneer to make construction grade plywood. 'We are trying to feed these mills the product so they put it out on building and construction sites so that it is in use' said Mr. Rolley.