

Forestry as a Long-Term Process



The foresters drawing up rotation plans for our working forests today won't be around to see the results of their work. Forestry is a long-term process – the fastest-growing plantations may be ready for harvest only 15 years or so after planting, but in other forests, rotations can be as long as 90 years, or in special cases, 200 years.



One Hundred Years Ahead

And foresters don't just plan one rotation ahead – they plan multiple rotations, looking forward 100 years and more into the future to ensure that as forests are harvested, they are regenerated to grow again.



In recent years, this long-term focus has been emphasised in working forests where partial harvesting strategies are increasingly used. The terminology has changed, to reflect the importance of the trees that are retained for future growth, over the trees that are removed – Tasmanian foresters now refer to the practice of 'advanced growth retention' rather than 'overstorey removal'.

What will our forests look like in 20 years? 50 years? 100 years?

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Another change that has demanded a long-term view of the timber resource is the declining availability of large quantities of very large logs, as extensive areas of oldgrowth forest have been placed in reserves. This means that foresters and timber processors will have to rely more and more on smaller diameter logs from younger regrowth and plantation sources. Forest planning over the past fifteen years in particular has had a focus on establishing plantations to ensure a future supply of plantation logs suitable for "re-engineered timber products", as well as pulpwood. Re-engineered products are the future of the timber industry – in which small lengths of timber, or thin sheets of timber, are glued together to make very strong timber beams and boards.



In southern Tasmania, the Huon Wood Centre is a good example of how 21st century timber processing technology is gearing up to maximise the value of wood from regrowth forests and plantations – the main value-adding operations carried out here, such as rotary peel veneer sheet, use only wood from these two sources.



The Best Way, The Only Way

Taking the long-term view is the best way – in fact, the only way – that we can achieve sustainable yield from our forests, so that they can provide us with the timber products we need today as well as a century from now.

