

(W.A. Division)

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Chairman: D. Spriggins
Secretary: Ian Kealley
Committee: Peter Hewett
Jim Williamson

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER

1. CHRISTMAS BARBECUES

A reminder of the two I.F.A. Christmas Barbecues, excellent evenings for all.

COMO

I.F.A. MAD HATTERS TEA PARTY,
Saturday 4th December,
7.00pm Como Headquarters,
\$10.00 per head.

Members are reminded to send their money to

Co-ordinator,
I.F.A. Barbecue,
C/- Extensions Branch,
Forests Department,
50 Hayman Road,
COMO.

MANJIMUP

I.F.A. members and their family and friends are invited to attend the End-of-year barbecue function on Saturday, 4th December, commencing at 6pm.

To be held at Alan and Bernadette Lush's residence:
36 Brain Street, Manjimup.

Salads and Rolls will be provided. Bring along all the Refreshments and meat please.

Look forward to seeing you there.

2. NATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Queensland has advised that to date 650 questionnaires have been returned, about a 40% response. Any members who haven't sent their questionnaires in please do quickly as computer processing of the results will commence soon.

3. DARLING RANGE STUDY GROUP REPORT

The final draft of the D.R.S.G. Report "Land Use in the Darling Range" is now available.

The Institute has been involved with the D.R.S.G. in connection with bauxite mining for some time. Following the release of the I.F.A. Report on bauxite mining we visited the D.R.S.G. to explain and discuss the issues raised in our report. These views were favourably received.

We now have the opportunity to comment upon the recommendations made by the D.R.S.G., not only on bauxite mining but on numerous other issues which cover forested areas. (See attached copy of newsletter).

We believe the I.F.A. should make a formal comment on the D.R.S.G. Report. We have been critical of some conservation groups etc who have failed to comment on forestry proposals when given the opportunity and it would be remiss of us if we ourselves failed to do so in this case.

Anyone wishing to comment or read the Report should contact Jim Williamson in Como who holds the I.F.A. copy and is co-ordinating replies from members who were asked to comment.

Comments should be sent to Jim Williamson as soon as possible.

4. INSTITUTE DISCUSSIONS - JUNE 1982

During June members of the W.A. Division participated in panel discussions on the two themes: "How the forestry profession sees itself" and "How others see the profession."

In the first meeting at Como, foresters Jim Williamson, Gavin Butcher and Pat McNamara gave their personal views on the strengths, weaknesses and future role of this profession. The major points to emerge from their talks and from subsequent discussion were:-

1. The profession has a major responsibility to provide clear and objective advice on forestry matters to the public and to Government. The profession must seek to improve the standard of public debate on forestry matters. To do this it must be prepared to enter the debate with, where necessary, independent professional views.
2. In W.A. the profession is not seen as independent from the Forests Department. We have not developed or marketed a professional image of our own.

In this context, our professional image is regarded as being:-

- high with Government and opposition
- indifferent with most of the public
- low the conservation groups
- rock bottom with the academics.

3. Compared with some other professions, foresters are characterised by breadth of knowledge, an ability to get things done on the ground and wideranging scientific skills. In the past these strengths have been counterbalanced by political naivety, skills in conflict resolution and professional introversion.
4. The past "triumphs" of the profession have never been properly publicised (for example, the battle for dedication of State Forests in W.A.). There is a need to highlight the historical influences in current controversies.
5. The most serious weakness of the profession in the past, and currently its greatest need, concerns public education. Many of the professions' most influential critics are schoolteachers and academic teaching staff in tertiary institutions, and we must urgently determine ways of improving communications with these groups.

In the 2nd meeting at Bunbury, speakers were foresters Tammie Reid, Graham Siemon and Cameron Schuster.

The major points emerging were:-

1. Education and Communication with the public on forestry matters

There is need throughout Australia for a better performance by the profession in educating and communicating with the public on forestry matters.

Because forestry has really only come under public scrutiny within the last 10 years, foresters have not yet developed communications skills in the way that many other professions have.

Public scrutiny will increase not decrease. Failure to project forestry matters favourably will threaten our professional image. We live in a political world where technical competence is not enough and it is essential to be able to get the message across well.

Younger members of the profession felt they should be consulted more by older members. Many felt they had a better perception of what the public think and react to.

There is a special need to get the message on forestry matters across better to school children. A simple, interesting and preferably involvement approach is required.

There is a need for more education on the growing of trees and uses of timber. Assistance for private forestry by way of incentives was favoured.

The Institute does not need to compromise on forestry issues to the same extent which government services may have to do to comply with government policy. Where government policy clearly conflicts with sound forestry practice the Institute should take a more aggressive and outspoken stand.

The Institute should become very much involved in projects such as "The Greening of Australia".

2. How the forester is coping

The forester is seen as being under pressure from many directions and being expected to perform well as a manager, an environmentalist, lawyer, economist, public relationist etc. Generally he is not coping as well as he would like to.

Some younger members were concerned as to whether the technical knowledge level of senior members of the profession was adequate enough to keep them sufficiently in touch with the problems being faced.

There was concern by some that as they progressed in the profession they were likely to become engulfed in administrative paper work and less able to keep up their technical knowledge level. Though technical knowledge is always changing, skill lies in being able to discard and assimilate new information.

3. Education of Foresters

More recent graduates felt that their formal forestry training was inadequate for the forestry work they had been engaged on since graduation.

Adequate training in basic management and communication skills should be included in University courses.

The Institute should take an active interest in forestry training courses at the University. A survey of opinions of graduates on the value of their formal training would be a useful starting exercise.

4. Institute membership/Employee membership

Most Australian foresters are employees, mostly of Government Services and therefore are usually identified that way first by the public.

Many Institute members find it difficult to know when they are representing the views of their employer or when they are representing the Institute.

Some felt that their employer was representing the profession, others were concerned at this and felt that the profession should present its own views.

Government employed foresters have to espouse government policy. Where this conforms with good forestry practice there is no undue problem but where sound forestry is put at risk by unwise government policy then the Institute has an opportunity to take action which the government forester could find difficult to do.

Finally, it was agreed there was need for an induction booklet to be given to members of the Institute as they join. In this booklet, this duality of role of most members is to be discussed and guidelines given.

5. W.A. QUESTIONNAIRE

To date 38 questionnaires have been returned, they give us some idea of what members want regarding trips and meetings. Please return your questionnaire and help us with our decisions.

A report of the results will be in the December Newsletter.

6. FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

Contributions, on any subject or happenings are more than welcome. Send contributions to Ian Kealley, Bunbury.

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Ian Kealley,
Secretary.
17/11/82.