



# AUSTRALIAN FOREST CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION LTD.

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## “The Log” 5 July 2011



Hello and welcome to another weekly edition of “The Log”, the Australian Forest Contractors Association Ltd’s own internal electronic Newsletter for all of our Members and Corporate Partner Sponsors.

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Firstly this week Community Research Centre Forestry (CRCF) have released another of their information bulletins. Bulletin 19 looks at a harvesting trial done on a very low productivity plantation with full tree chipping to produce biomass for wood pellet production as an alternative to cutting to waste.

With opportunities emerging in Australia to use wood fibre as biofuel, some plantation owners are considering harvesting plantations for biomass rather than for pulp chips, particularly for low-performing plantations where tree size and overall volume per hectare do not allow a profitable pulp chip harvest. Part of this consideration is the expectation of savings in harvesting costs for the lower quality biomass product without the need for debarking and the higher proportion of the whole tree that can be utilised.

This study evaluated harvesting productivity and costs in a very low productivity mixed-hardwood plantation, in which biomass was harvested for conversion to wood pellets.

As usual, if you would like a copy, just contact me and I’ll forward one to you.

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And now a reminder that the haulage operators among us doesn't really need:

The effective fuel tax paid by the trucking industry and registration charges rose on Friday 1 July, as a result of their regular yearly adjustment.

The industry's effective fuel tax increased by about 2.4 per cent, from 22.6 cents per litre to 23.1 cents per litre. To implement this increase, the fuel tax credits trucking operators can claim on their business activity statements fell from 15.543 cents per litre to 15.043 cents per litre.

Truck registration charges also increased by 2.4 per cent, with the standard registration charge for a six-axle semi trailer increasing from \$5,612 to \$5,746, and the charge for a B-double increasing from \$15,340 to \$15,708.

The Australian Trucking Association argued against the increase in the fuel tax and registration charges, with a submission in March saying that many trucking operators could not afford to pay any increase in charges.

The submission also said:

- any increases should be delayed until 1 October to give trucking operators six months to negotiate price increases with their customers.
- the very high charges on lead or A-trailers were stopping operators from using safer and more productive trucks like B-doubles. It called on governments to consider a windback of A/lead trailer charges, as well as the introduction of part-year registration payments without penalties and concessional registrations for A-trailers used permanently in road trains.
- the increase was based on an underestimate of the charges already paid by trucking operators.

Unfortunately the ATA's recommendations were not heeded and the charges have increased as planned.

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Still on the transport side of our industry, a new 1800 telephone number intended to highlight good driver behaviour and foster improvements in log-truck driver safety has been introduced in New South Wales. The number – 1800 5644 285 – was developed jointly by Forests NSW and the Tumut based Forest Industry Council (FIC). The program will begin in the Tumut region and then roll out across other Forests NSW areas.



The program is designed to allow other road users to phone a call centre with compliments or complaints about log truck activity. Members of the public to call in if they see good or bad behaviour or any safety issues with the truck or load that they want to report. The program will gather data on driver behaviour and highlight positive driving as well as other safety areas that are causing concern to the public

The Forest Industry Council has contributed significant funds towards the project which will see each log truck operated by contractors to Forests NSW have a sign bearing the 1800 telephone number as well as an individual truck identification number.



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The Council and all of its Contractor members working with Forests NSW are committed to improving all aspects of safety, and log-truck driver behaviour is part of the process. Contractors will conduct investigations into all complaints and use the outcomes to improve safety across their fleets.



Calls from the public will go to an independent call centre where the date, time, location and incident details will be recorded, along with caller details and truck identification number. The details of callers will be kept confidential. Contractors will then be able to provide feedback to callers, if requested, as to the steps that have been taken to prevent the reoccurrence of the issue that is raised.



Another major aim of the program is to improve public perception of the industry. AFCA will be keen to follow the statistics from the program as they are released at each FIC meeting we attend.



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Still on transport, we are pleased to announce our connection with the “Trans-Help Foundation”.

The Trans-Help Foundation was established in 2006 by a group of dedicated individuals who have firsthand knowledge and experience of family life and hardships within the transport industry.

The concept of the foundation was to address the many problems drivers face in the course of their everyday work, their expansion and direction has been a result of what’s been identified as “The call of the road”.

The Trans-Help Foundation has worked tirelessly since its inception to ensure a solid support system was established. They have remained independent and have now gained and maintain the confidence and trust of the transport industry.



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In 2008 their first Mobile Health and Support Unit became a reality, thanks to Iveco Trucks. The unit now prowls along freight corridors throughout the country providing free preliminary medical checks and enables drivers to be checked for high blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol, & obesity

Some of their health and support results are alarming. As an example,

**BLOOD PRESSURE:** Of all drivers tested the results were, Extremely High 19%, High 28%, Moderate 37% Normal 16%

**DEPRESSION:** On Medication 22%, Serious 24%, Mild 39%, Never told anyone of it: 25%

**BMI:** Extremely Obese 22%, Obese 14%, Overweight 37%, Healthy 20%, Underweight 3%

Where do your drivers fit into these statistics? Have they ever been checked?. AFCA would like to encourage all of our members, not just those with drivers, to make sure that your employee's health is monitored and any alarming signs are looked after. A little care today could save a major tragedy tomorrow.

We are pleased to have developed an association with the Trans-Health Foundation and thank the people at Iveco Trucks for making the introductions. We look forward to working with them more in the future. If you would like more details of their work: [www.transhelpfoundation.com.au](http://www.transhelpfoundation.com.au) is the website.



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Well, that's all for this week. Thanks for taking the time to read this edition of "The Log". We look forward to bringing you some more news from our industry again in two weeks time.

Regards to all  
David Drane

