



## Building support for the industry

THE social and economic changes associated with the growing plantation sector will be discussed in a series of seminars in southern NSW this month, with Bombala being included next Monday, February 20.

The presentations of new and independent impact studies of plantation forestry will be part of the Timber Communities Australia (TCA) 'Summer 2006 Outreach' initiative.

Ten year forestry veteran Craig Marriott, 51, says that more than a decade ago the bulk of knock-about jobs in Bombala were in farm labouring but that the timber industry had today opened up real career opportunities for locals.

"When I first came up here, there were only basically labouring type jobs and the sawmill, but now there are real career opportunities for young people," Craig says.

"I run the Delegate

depot for Willmott Forests, and a major part of the job is forestry purchasing of equipment and chemicals.

"I also look after pest animal control - rabbits, hares and goats, and work with local Landcare groups in dog and fox baiting.

"Working with the company, I've been trained in fire fighting, first aid and chemical safety; safely operating a 4WD ATV and I've had management training. I'm also on the OH&S committee."

Craig was interviewed as part of the TCA Summer Outreach program to build on popular support for the regional timber industry.

"Summer 2006 Outreach is a chance, in times of continuing change, to underscore the critical importance of forest industries to the sustainable growth of regional communities," according to TCA national director Jill Lewis.

The outreach program will include a tour of southern NSW by inde-

pendent ANU Research Fellow Jacki Schirmer talking to local government councils, community groups and media.

Jacki will visit Bombala next Monday to report on results of new research projects in this area, focusing on the recent research undertaken by the Bureau of Rural Sciences, as well as planned future research.

Important findings regarding the level, type and location of employment and spending by the plantation sector over time will be presented, as well as the links between plantation sector expansion and changes in rural population, services and land prices.

Seminar participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the socio-economic issues relating to plantation forestry in their local area.

Equipment and plant officer, Craig Marriott says that in the early '90s he used to come to Bombala on shooting trips and he and wife Julie and

kids Callie and John decided to relocate to the mountain country around that time.

"When we moved up here, I struggled to find a job for a little while and I worked casually at farm work and in the sawmills," Craig says.

"In the past there has been a kind of distrust of the plantation industry as the first major private operator in the region went broke. But over the years, the plantation industry has just grown and grown and more and more of the locals are benefiting.

"There are some people who don't like to see farm land going into plantations," he continued.

"One of the problems here is that a lot of land is locked up and people are not allowed to clear properties so the only available land for new plantations is existing open space.

"Despite some of the issues and claims, plantations are becoming more and more accepted as part of the local scene."



•Interviewed as part of the TCA's Summer Outreach Program, forestry veteran Craig Marriott says that the timber industry has opened up real career opportunities for locals.