



Plantation research

REPRESENTATIVES of Willmott Forests, NSW Forestry, NSW Farmers' Association, the Bombala Council and even the Bombala High School attended the Timber Communities Australia Summer 2006 Outreach Seminar on Monday, February 20.

The seminar, which was held at the Bombala HACC Centre, aimed to deliver the message that plantation forestry expansion contributes to change in regional towns such as Bombala, but does not lead to decline.

This message was delivered by ANU Research Fellow Jacki Schirmer during a presentation of the results of ongoing independent research assessing 'the socio-economic impacts of plantation forestry'.

The presentation outlined the effects of forestry in the south west slopes region of NSW,

and covered areas of debate such as the affects on population, employment, land and rental prices, services and overall value of the industry.

"Amongst the conclusions of the research," said Jacki, "is that the plantation sector creates regional employment and investment, with most of this occurring in towns such as Tumut.

"Plantations are clearly part of the reason that areas such as Tumut, Tumbarumba and Holbrook have demonstrated an increase in population and direct employment while other towns have declined.

"A high number of those are of working age who bring with them families and contribute to the local economy through spending," said Jacki.

The research figures presented at the seminar showed that while similar sized towns have experi-

enced drops of up to 15 per cent in population, those with plantation areas have increased.

The study also covered the Greater Southern region of Western Australia.

Among other key points which Jacki presented from the research were:

- * That while farming numbers continue to decline there is no evidence that plantations caused a higher decline;

- * That plantations in fact tend to be established where traditional farming was already under pressure;

- * That diversity in land use, including plantations, had a positive affect on an areas ability to survive and prosper; and

- * That land prices increase in these areas from other demands as much as from plantations.

Jacki pointed out that

the one negative area from the research of particular interest is that plantations have affected the availability and therefore prices of rental properties.

Following her presentation, Jacki answered questions put forward by the gathering, and was very interested in receiving feedback and local views that may assist her in future long term studies concerning plantations and their socio-economic impacts.

Jacki's three presentations in Bombala, Tumut and Tumbarumba were hosted by TCA, with the research of her presentations conducted by the Bureau of Rural Sciences with funding from the Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation.



•TCA's Southern NSW State Manager, Peter Lezaich welcomed the gathering to Monday's seminar.



•ANU Research Fellow Jacki Schirmer outlined the results of a socio-economic impact study.