Hi all,

James' prompt & Marcus Musson’s recent posts have finally encouraged me to stick my head above the parapet, don't shoot me please. Feel free to come & have a coffee to discuss.

As a passionate Forester/ Registered Member/ Forest Owner & Forest Management business owner I give a fair bit of thought to the state of play of the industry I really enjoy being part of. There's a bit going on at the moment - Shane Jones reckons we are all rogues & compulsory registration is on it’s way, other primary land use associations have been taking their pot shots, we’ve had some environmental outcomes which haven’t been our best work & mean while we have got back on the export volatility roller coaster in the last 15 months. So yeah, nah, good.

What the Forest Industry seems to lack in 2020 to me is the ability to effectively influence - Politicians, local authorities, the public perception.

Are we 'influencing' our future as best we can? You would have to say NO.

Why not? I think we have a fragmented industry that hasn't mastered the art of influence as other Sectors have more succesfully.

So how can we better influence? To me we need to take a critical look at the organisations/ Associations/ Committee's/ Groups that people in the Industry put time into, & take the leap to consolidate a bunch of these entities for a more streamlined structure that everyone in the industry can get behind so we get maximum bang for our buck. There is FOA/ FISC/ FICA/ NZIF/ Self-elected Regional Wood Councils/ Future Foresters/ Regional H&S and Environmental groups & Committes that all toil away doing their best, & competing for the small & limited pool of volunteer time. And yes achievements have been made, so it's not a shot at lack of trying. But to be frank we are not influencing outcomes & perception as good as we could.

The process of the Log Traders & Forestry Advisors Bill passing through Parliament left me with the thought of 'How did we get ourselves into this situation', and 'Why were we not able to better influence the outcome'? This got me thinking about how we could better represent our industry to have more influence in future.

The start point of the solution to me is we need to look at one single organisation to represent the industry. Bring all of the Groups under one umbrella & create a simple structure that cuts out duplication of effort, cost and overlap that exists at the moment with the various Entities, & harness the volunteers to operate sub-groups who all contribute to the whole.

How could it function?

If we had Regions feeding up to the National level, by Regional Wood Councils being formalised to have a function of reporting up Regional issues/ initiatives/ good news stories for promotion & feeding back down the stuff created at National level. In the Regions all the 'on ground' work is happening, so people in the Regions need to be engaged with this by being involved. Wood Councils should have a compulsory makeup of Forest Owners/ Managers/ Contractors/ Farm Forestry/ Under 30yr old's - where there is a set time rotation to enable opportunity for new people to come through & contribute a range of views & experiences & also ensure that it is not always the same people/ companies carrying too much burden. The Regional Wood Councils at their level would operate things like Regional HS & E Groups & specifically seek out Regional matters to take to the National body for industry good & vice versa work on completing projects determined at National level such as input to ROVE. There needs to be diversity of age & background of people in these forums so the thoughts are not biased to one sub-set of our industry – the whole spectrum of people should be asked to contribute ideas & time.

At the National Level, the entity would gather up Regional thoughts/ ideas/ solutions/ issues & seek to exert influence by speaking on behalf of all Stakeholders.

The national entity would need to have sub-groups to break it down into parts - People (Career path, training, Wellbeing, Culture etc), Professionalism (Registration, Legislation, Standards etc), Innovation (R&D, forestry in the future, productivity etc) as examples.

This is clearly just an idea & there is a lot more detail needed but I am sure most can see what I am getting at. I am not saying that the current Entities & people are not doing any good work, it is more that we are ending up with limited 'Influence' for our efforts.

So my proposal is that FOA/ NZIF/ FICA in particular look to engage in the first instance to discuss the concept of how the industry could better represent itself under one umbrella. The Log Traders & Forestry Advisers Regulations will require coordinated industry input so that it doesn't turn into a dog's breakfast, why not get our stuff together so a united industry can Influence the outcomes of these Regulations as the first case in point & then onwards & upwards from there.

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