

Climate Change Risk & Vulnerability: Implications for the plantation industry

The Australian Government has taken action towards planning for the potential impact of climate change on vulnerable regions throughout the nation with a report released on 26 July 2005 by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell.

The document, *Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability—promoting an efficient adaptation response in Australia* provides a valuable insight into how early planning could help governments, industries and communities plan for the effects of climate change, adapt to the impacts and exploit any opportunities.

This report is particularly pertinent for both management of native forests and planning for a future plantation estate.

The full report devotes two pages of discussion to Forestry. (The forestry excerpt can be found at: 'Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability, Promoting an efficient adaptation response in Australia', Report to the Australian Greenhouse Office, Department of the Environment and Heritage, by The Allen Consulting Group, Commonwealth of Australia 2005 pp54-55).

The discussion suggests that climate change is likely to affect planted and native forests in the southern parts of Australia where currently the majority of forest production occurs, as a result of reduction in rainfall. It is also flagged that native forests may have a poor adaptive capacity and may require intervention to maintain diversity. However, it is stated that plantation forestry has a high adaptive capacity, and if we take advantage of long planning horizons '*early attention to the impact of climate change impacts will ensure industry viability.*' Possible suggested approaches for adaptive management include investigating heat and drought tolerant species and planting regimes to ameliorate climate change impacts.

The full report also includes regional studies of potential climate vulnerability including eg the Southwest of Western Australia that has experienced a 10 to 20 percent decrease in its winter rainfall over the last 30 years, and in tandem with this, substantially increased temperatures over the last half century.

The challenge for the plantation industry is to start some adaptive management, which will undoubtedly benefit from improved forecasting and understanding at regional scale of climate change implications. Where do we go next?

To access the media release, full report and executive summary:

<http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/impacts/publications/risk-vulnerability.html>