

**Name:** Alan Hartley

**About you:** Business

**Name of your business or organisation:** Crescent Plateau Holdings

**1. What improvements should the NSW Government consider making to the existing Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice (Northern NSW, Southern NSW, River Red Gum Forests, and Cypress and Western Hardwood Forests)?:**

Northern NSW. One of the major problems facing PNF is "highgrading" meaning the repeated extraction of most desirable timber leaving the less desirable species behind to eventually become the major seed sources for regenerating forest. The desirable species mix does vary e.g grey gum is often shunned but on other occasions is acceptable albeit with a lower royalty. It would help if a list of species acceptable to mills and which could help help to bring the seed source back into line on an individual property basis could be easily accessed. The mills need not necessarily be the closest or biggest but contractors could be sought to conduct reasonably species specific harvesting profitably, with an acceptable royalty.

**2. Do you have any suggestions to ensure the Private Native Forestry regulatory settings are efficient, enforceable and effective?:**

Regulatory settings will only meet the targets if they are do not punish landowners where the fault actually lies with the enforcing bureaucracy: see next section.

**3. How can the NSW Government improve the authorisation and approval system for Private Native Forestry?:**

I give you two verifiable encounters with the bureaucracy. I bought mainly forested land in 1998 with the aim of establishing an avocado orchard on about 20% of the area with favourable soils leaving the rest under native forest . In about 2000 I undertook my first timber harvest (with PNF authorisation). Two forestry field officers met with myself and the contractor and I showed them a map I had been given showing very steep land over which restricted harvesting applied. The mapped area obviously covered gently sloping land part of which would become orchard. The Forestry staff simply said:" ignore the mapping-it's always wrong and if we waited for it to be corrected we would never get any work done. There is a harvesting code - the contractor knows that and he'll follow it." The implication is clear - the responsible mapping authority was recognised inter-departmentally as defective and to be ignored at least at field level where it's application really mattered. The second instance concerns a more

recent application to get my farm plan back on track by clearing about 6-10 hectare of suitable land following the replacement of the Native Vegetation Act 2003. I was an agreed cooperator with LLS in seeing how the new Biodiversity Act would work. Field staff visited the property three times to take slope measurements first defining steep Vulnerable land and then marking the extent of land which could legally be cleared under the new Act. The field investigations included a vegetation expert. The field data was passed up the line in the Department to the mapping service and to the unit entrusted with PNF registration. The latter told me my PVP had expired some years earlier - I told them that I had a copy of my PVP dated Novemer2016 on my desk in front of me (from EPA Grafton). They subsequently admitted their inter-unit communications were faulty. I then received a Determination from the mapping unit that showed mapped steep vulnerable land covering areas across which field staff had assembled acceptable ground truth slope measurements showing the opposite. The mapping unit simply played up the technical capabilities of their LIDAR remote sensing source and ignored the field work. It is the height of professional incompetence and arrogance to ignore reliable ground truth when applying remote sensing to mapping especially, and this is particularly pertinent to the PVP/PNF scenario, where relatively small areas are involved. Universally, professionals in the application of remote sensing seize on reliable ground truth to fine tune their interpretations, not the other way round. I did receive an apology from the mapping unit and a representative was present on a subsequent field visit. The two experiences point to a long history of incompetence within the NSW mapping bureaucracy, and if my experience is repeated every time an application is made pertaining to PNF/PVP then the whole system will be unworkable. Inbuilt incompetence on the part of the responsible bureaucracy should not subsequently be used as an excuse for enforcement triggered by sheer frustration. The answer is simple. Maps are an essential part of defining PVP/PNF parameters on individual properties. If the mapping unit is incapable of defining error limits and adapting their mapping procedures to relatively small areas, then they should simply

issue a broad brush indication of which areas on a property are likely to be available for PNF and note that within these areas the Forestry Code of Practice will apply to timber removal and land protection The Code addresses these issues thoroughly. In other words the LLS should butt-out of the detail and allow Forestry and EPA handle the procedure until LLS management has learned how to handle it's brief.

**4. What training and advice services would assist landholders, industry and the community?:**

I believe that the training and advice services should be directly first and foremost to LLS management. Farmers and landowners share an overwhelming interest (unrecognised by many Authorities) in looking after their land for the long haul without being pandered to by do-gooders and social-media driven idealists.

**5. Do you have any other comments or feedback relevant to Private Native Forestry that you would like to share with us?:**