

Too costly to harvest?

Many District Councils are attempting to impose excessive costs on forest growers for road upgrades to transport harvested wood.

After paying rates for the whole rotation period – around 27 years – and making little demand on Council services, it is totally unfair for Councils to “double dip” by demanding that forest growers contribute – in many cases very substantially – for the upgrade of district roads.

Forest growers should not be penalised if Councils are unable to run their financial affairs to provide from earlier rate payments sufficient funds to provide adequate roads for harvesting purposes.

In addition to one off payments, at least one Council has applied a differential of 4 on forested land for roading purposes, and other Councils are placing restrictions on the number of log trucks and trailers which can use certain district roads on a daily basis.

It is likely that in some cases it will simply be too costly to harvest smaller woodlots to the serious disadvantage of the forest owner, the local community, and the country.

The Minister for Forests has agreed that the Infrastructure Working Group of the Wood Processing Strategy should investigate the whole way in which forested land is rated particularly for the provision of an adequate road infrastructure.

Hopefully this exercise will demonstrate the inequality of the current practice of imposing additional road upgrades and maintenance costs on forest growers, and recommend fairer ways to address this issue.