

COMMUNICATION and getting the message across to Queensland's city dwellers that the State's farmers and rural landholders are responsible custodians of the land will be the prime focus of the Life Source movement.

That was the message last Thursday when Life Source launched its logo in Rockhampton at the office of website and graphic design studio, FM Studios.

FM Studios managing director Bronwyn Fenech who hails from rural Central Queensland with her family operating Fenech Brahman Cattle Co, Wowan, said FM Studios designed the logo and the Life Source website free of charge to show its support for the movement.

"As a country girl and with my family involved in the beef

LIFE SOURCE:

Communication is key

industry, this is my contribution to it because I think it's a great idea," Ms Fenech said.

"The initial concept was to develop a logo bridging the gap between rural and urban sectors because it seems to be people in urban areas who are making decisions for the rural sector.

"As a business in a regional area, we have been subject to negative stereotypes as well at times.

"The logo depicts two abstract boomerangs – the steel coloured one on the left represents the urban sector, and the red earth colour on the right represents the rural sector, with the green leaf in the

middle showing they are uniting for the benefit of the future of the land.

"The overall shape is a sort of abstract Australia."

With Life Source setting itself a target of raising in excess of \$10 million for a fighting fund to propel its campaign of battling the extreme green movement, Life Source spokesperson Peter Mahony, Woolshed, Theodore, said he would be out and about at Beef 2009 spreading the word.

Mr Mahony said Life Source would next week detail its exact aims and how the fighting fund will be used. –

Story and picture: MELISSA MARTIN.



FM Studios managing director Bronwyn Fenech and Peter Mahony from Life Source with the movement's logo, designed by FM Studios.

Plantation bubble bursts

By **MATTHEW CRANSTON** and **SCOTT ELLIOTT**

MORE than 100,000 hectares of radiata pine and blue gum is up for sale and the sellers, including the administrators of Timbercorp, are struggling as the one-time boom in plantation country turns to bust.

Values are falling. Timbercorp sank into administration partly because four bids for the company's forest properties came in well below book value.

At forestry hot spot Casino, in northern NSW, values for forestry land have dropped 15 to 20 percent, said a local agent, PRD Nationwide's Kel Gunther.

"The tree companies had been the floor in the market, paying up to \$6000/hectare," he said. "They have now stopped. They have tightened right up. Prices have almost come back a \$1000/ha plantable."

In the days of cheap debt, prolific buyers like Timbercorp and Great Southern stormed the market, shutting out competing buy-

ers such as sugarcane farmers in Queensland's north and graziers in Victoria's western districts.

Now spot prices for pulp wood are dropping, debt has all but dried up and retail investors have stepped back from anything related to managed investment schemes (MIS).

Even the potential buyers of such forest properties have major misgivings. Great Southern, which last year held 180,000ha of freehold forestry land, has been trying to sell off its portfolio but struck a hurdle when a \$23 mil-

lion sale fell through this year.

Victorian land valuer, Sam Paton, predicted the bubble in forestry land prices.

"Many companies just kept planting willy nilly and didn't think about who was going to buy the product at certain prices and whether there was a capacity to both harvest and process it," he said.

"Now you have a very large area of plantings that were planted in 2000-02 that are coming up for harvest. Demand has dropped off and the spot price for woodchip has gone down. The numbers just don't stack up.

"If somebody was doing due diligence on these properties they will be asking, is there a market for new trees after the harvest, and if not, what is the conversion cost to take it back to grass?"

He estimated that converting a forestry property back to a typical hectare of grazing – which sells for about \$4000 to \$4500/ha – would cost up to \$3000/ha.

John Kellas, from the Regional Plantation Committee

in Victoria, oversees the so-called green triangle of forestry country in the state's south-west.

Dr Kellas said complex ownership structures, mismanagement and exporting problems – especially in Japan where there is a backlog of woodchips – did not bode well for property values in the medium term.

"They've paid up to \$7500/ha in this region so that's the very top end. They bought a lot of land at \$1000 to \$2000/ha 10 years ago."

The early signs of values falling over came through when Timbercorp subsidiary, Plantation Land, put a portfolio to the market late last year.

It was valued at \$42 million halfway through 2008, down from \$47 million in 2007, according to the company's records.

At Tenterfield, NSW, Ray White Rural's Bruce Birch has seen the buying activity of forest companies stall.

"They had been buying the properties at the vendors' asking

prices and some of the graziers were getting their noses out of joint," he said.

"(The plantation companies) have been underpinning the values but I think they will get a lot cheaper because the forest companies are not as active.

"The capital growth in the past 12 months has just plateaued. There just haven't been any sales."

The forestry business is not all over yet. GMO Renewable Resources purchased 33,000ha from Gunns in the Green Triangle region of Victoria and South Australia for \$173.2 million in February, a price slightly below book value.

Listed company, Forest Enterprises Australia, has 75 properties for sale but its chief executive, Andrew White, said they were testing the market.

"We now have five properties at various stages of contract with sale prices meeting or slightly exceeding book value totalling \$10.3 million." – *Australian Financial Review.*

URGENT Outback Campaign Seeks A Partner



Outback Calling Ltd has a plan for a continuing, ever intensifying Campaign, founded on the outcomes of Year of the Outback 2002 and extensive Australia wide research.

However to fulfill this plan not-for-profit Outback Calling Ltd now urgently seeks a Corporate Partner to join with it in the Outback Calling Campaign to heighten recognition of the real values of Rural Australia, its people, its industries; to be a driver of marketing to attract residents and travellers to the 'Bush'; to foster career

opportunities for young Australians in rural regions and to initiate major projects identified with the Outback to expand trade, tourism, investment and showcase issues of global significance.

In return, a Corporate Partner will attract the substantial benefits flowing from direct identification with a Campaign embracing countless individuals and communities; a massive program of activities with unlimited national potential; a website destined to become one of the most comprehensive and visited sites relating to rural Australia, with

these combining to achieve goals of vital national importance.

Year of the Outback 2002 detonated a nationwide chain reaction. Existing events were registered and publicised on the Outback 2002 website and through the media and other networks. Most were expanded for the special 'year'. New projects were created – many have been continued. A 3,000 event national program was progressively formulated. Travellers went bush in record numbers. Testimonials were numerous and included –

"There is no doubt that South Australia's Calendar of events for the Year of the Outback has helped to brand the state as a natural gateway to the Outback. It has helped South Australia's Outback operators break into tourism distribution systems nationally and internationally. Outback travel products in overseas and national wholesale programs has jumped in some cases by 200%."

The Hon Mike Rann MP, Premier of South Australia

"Visitor numbers increased by 10.9% to 60,765 and gross sales increased by 24.5% to \$1,463,070. The outstanding success of Year of the Outback, played a major role in this result by emphasising Outback Tourism."

Mr Ken Cowley AO, Chairman Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame to the Annual Meeting 21 November 2002

At year's end it was estimated that Outback 2002 had an influence in generating benefits from media and other publicity, travel and tourism-related commercial activity to a value exceeding \$300 million.

The infinite capacities of individuals and communities to favourably influence progress became more obvious as Outback 2002 advanced. In isolation towns, districts and their communities may seem insignificant; dots on a map in a vast expanse. En-masse, they represent an immense force and it is to them that the nation looks for much of its productive capacity and real wealth.

It is these same myriad of communities across the country that rallied to the Outback banner, linked hands with fellow Australians and made the Year of the Outback the success it was.

Post 2002 – There were persistent calls for what Year of the Outback had begun to continue and expand. Nationwide networking and communications continued. In 2007 the Federal Government provided some funding to plan ongoing programs.

An Action Plan has evolved. It presents a continuing ever intensifying Outback Campaign with a four year tempo – Outback Calling 2010, 2014, 2018 and onwards – to

encourage medium and long term planning and the opportunity for setting goals and monitoring progress.

Outback Calling Campaign – In 2009 the Campaign's foundations are being laid including special Sounding the Call events in rural locations.

Outback Calling 2010 will be a cornerstone year with the Campaign advancing across Australia spearheaded by a continuing nationwide Program of Events.

A Campaign Keystone is the Website – www.outbackcalling.com – 'Portal to the Outback' which currently includes:

Outback Calling National Calendar of Events – hosting activities, projects, events, meetings; currently hosts in excess of 1,500 activities at any given time, increasing daily; an estimated 4,000 for Outback Calling 2010;

Outback Online – Official Outback Calling electronic newsletter; approximately 14,000 readers, with circulation increasing rapidly;

Recently launched Outback Calling National Rural Service Providers Directory – an opportunity for businesses, organisations, local governments, community groups and charities to list and promote their services, attractions etc.

The Outback Calling Portal to the Outback website has been designed to become a veritable continent covering encyclopaedia of Outback related information to reach all parts of Australia and eventually, go global.

Through the Year of the Outback process we gained but a glimpse of what is possible when the energy and innovative, inventive and determined spirit of Australians and their communities is harnessed.

We now consider the Outback Calling Campaign plan ideally structured to continue what the Year of the Outback process began and that, supported with reasonable resources, has the capacity to meet its far reaching goals.

We are also confident that an organisation choosing to join with Outback Calling Ltd in taking the 'Campaign' forward will derive generous benefits.

Organisations wishing to explore the prospect of such a partnership are invited to contact me by email: bruce@outbackcalling.com, with the assurance that such contacts will be treated as strictly confidential.

*Bruce Campbell AM MBE
Chairman, Outback Calling Ltd
Founder, Year of the Outback
Senior Australian of the Year 2003*

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Rural Press described Year of the Outback 2002 as "A bold and imaginative concept to become the greatest driving force for investment, tourism and jobs ever developed for rural and regional Australia. Following the extraordinary success of Outback 2002, we held the hope that a way could be found to continue building on what it had begun. We have been represented in the extensive planning discussions and now unreservedly endorse the Outback Calling Campaign as ideally structured to fulfill its stated objectives and trust that Outback Calling Ltd can secure the support it is seeking so that the Outback Calling Campaign, that really belongs to all Australians, can proceed."

Drought assistance deadlines approaching in June...



Have you applied?

Primary producers and small business owners affected by the drought are invited to meet one-on-one with a QRAA representative about applying for financial support before the June deadlines. Our Client Liaison Officer will be available at a QRAA temporary office in your local area to discuss your eligibility and the application process for:

■ Exceptional Circumstance interest subsidy up to \$100,000

Support for primary producers and small businesses to contribute towards interest payments on new or existing loans.

Applications close: 15 June 2009 (However a 28 day grace period does apply)

■ Drought loans up to \$200,000

Low interest loans to assist primary producers with finance to cover costs associated with planting a post drought crop or restocking.

Applications close: 30 June 2009

QRAA temporary offices

MONTO	11 May (9:00am-4:00pm) QGAP Office
EIDSVOLD	12 May (9:00am-4:00pm) Eidsvold Shire Hall
BIGGENDEN	13 May (9:00am-4:00pm) Biggenden Memorial Hall
GAYNDAH	13 May (9:00am-4:00pm) QCWA Hall
BILOELA	12/13 May (9:00am-4:00pm) DPI&F Building
MURGON	19 May (9:00am-4:00pm) South Burnett Regional Council - Murgon Office

Further information about the assistance is available at www.qraa.qld.gov.au.

Reserve your personalised appointment by contacting QRAA.

Take advantage of this opportunity to discuss your financial requirements to enable you to submit an application before the June deadlines. Don't delay... apply today!



Freecall 1800 623 946
www.qraa.qld.gov.au

QRAA
Queensland Government
Supporting Queensland Industry

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