

AUSTRALIAN SANDALWOOD CO-OPERATIVE LTD NEWSLETTER

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Australian Sandalwood Co-operative Ltd

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FROM THE CHAIR – DEAN BUTLER

Greetings Australian Sandalwood Co-operative Ltd (ASC) members. It has been a quite different start to the year for everyone in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic has been very disruptive for many. The business of the Board has also been affected but we have been able to use this time to focus on the main issues at hand such as completing the grading standard and addressing the problems with the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (Act) and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018 (Regulations). The last Board meeting held on the 24th of March 2020 and was notable as there was a change in board composition with one resignation and the appointment of an independent board member.

The ASC and WA Sandalwood Plantations collaborated in developing the Standard Specification for the 'Harvesting' and 'Sale' of Plantation-grown Australian Sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) in Western Australia. The standard is now in a published form and will be available on the ASC and the Australian Sandalwood Network (ASN) websites for your reference (<https://www.sandalwood.coop/publications>). This specification is a valuable resource for members as it has defined the harvesting, debarking, cutting, preparation, grading, declaration and licencing for the sale of Australian sandalwood. Many thanks to our members Andrew Robinson and Grant Pronk for volunteering many hours of their time to successfully complete this project.

Our issues with the DBCA continue unabated. As some of you may be aware there has been a great degree of angst within the plantation sandalwood industry with regards to compliance with the Act and Regulations. Several ASC members have been prosecuted. Briefly some examples are: 1) Sandalwood has been confiscated, 2) Members prosecuted and cautioned after consultation with DBCA when transporting specifically controlled sandalwood, 3) A member has been prosecuted after consultation with DBCA when exporting specifically controlled sandalwood. Other sandalwood plantation growers are finding the paperwork requirements of the regulations to be a great burden on staff time and in general compliance is over regulated, impractical and unworkable.

We are continuing with our work in lobbying the Minister for Environment, Disability Services and Electoral Affairs for changes to be made to the Act and Regulations. As a result of this we have continued discussion with the DBCA over the last three months. Initial discussions did not provide much hope for early changes but the COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity for change because the government is now willing to work with industry in order to make changes to the Act and Regulations that will remove impediments to economic development post COVID-19. Several members and I have attended an initial workshop with members representing the ASN and other delegates from the Australian Sandalwood industry, the DBCA, FPC and the Pastoral and Graziers Association. What has become evident is that there is some

willingness to tinker at the edges of the current Act and Regulation but not to make the wholesale changes required by plantation growers to farm and sell their sandalwood with minimal hinderance. We will continue to lobby for the removal of plantation grown sandalwood from the regulatory control of the DBCA and a moratorium on prosecutions until the plantation regulations are finalised. (Secretary Bruce Storer provides more detail later). It is important to keep up the noise from the industry at this time. If members are concerned or are having issues in their dealings with the DBCA with regards to the Act and Regulations please contact the minister with your concerns or complaints on Minister.Dawson@dpc.wa.gov.au (Stephen Dawson).

At the March Board meeting we received Board members Andrew Robinson's resignation from the board. Many thanks to Andrew from all the board and on behalf of the members. Andrew has been tireless in his endeavours in researching regulations regarding sales and auctions, organising our first field day and in developing the Standard Specification for the 'Harvesting' and 'Sale' of Plantation-grown Australian Sandalwood.

Shelley Butler was appointed as an Independent Board member at the March meeting. Shelley is a lawyer working at the Public Trustee's Office in Perth and a plantation sandalwood grower. Over the last year Shelley has done significant work in the area of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018. Shelley has been appointed for a three-year term, which will require ratification at the next AGM.

The board is also seeking an independent board member with an accounting or commercial trading background to provide input into ASC board meetings and activities. Our preference would be for an existing member to fill this role. Please consider this if you have the relevant experience and forward your recommendations for the role. Like all our board positions the role does not attract remuneration but does have the kudos of a board position.

Dean Butler
ASC Chair

UPDATE ON DBCA, BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ACT 2016, BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION REGULATIONS 2018

The Australian Sandalwood Co-Operative has been lobbying DBCA and the Minister for the Environment quite extensively in regard to the new Act and Regulations for plantation sandalwood. Many plantation growers, including FPC believe it or not, have experienced significant difficulty abiding by the new Act and Regulations as well as encountering a punitive approach by DBCA. There has been significant lobbying by many industry stakeholders, as well as ASC.

Our efforts have paid off and on July 15th we were invited to a workshop with DBCA run by an independent facilitator. Attendees were ASC, ASN, FPC, PGA, WA Sandalwood Plantations, DBCA and Tuna Blue Facilitation.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DBCA

Initial discussions were on the sandalwood tracking form (STF). Multiple copies for each movement of the wood are required sometimes resulting in dozens or more copies, and a one-day prior notice period to transport. If for some reason transport does not occur on the projected day, all STF's must be altered and the Department notified by email and the altered STF carried at all times. Not very practical if you are out bush.

We have also asked for there to be no requirement for STF's for amounts of 20 kg or less as this is what industry would consider to be uncommercial amounts, to allow for samples to be collected and transported for quality testing and appraisal. A grower may wish to take half a dozen samples from their plantation to different locations for testing and this requires multiple STF's at present. As all STF's must be kept for 5 years so we are seeking to minimise the amount required.

Secondly, we have asked for one licence to cover all aspects of plantation activity including taking, pruning, thinning, transport, sale, value adding and processing by the grower.

DBCA have conceded that the new Act and Regulations were rushed, are flawed and are having unintended consequences. However, they state that they cannot alter the Act and Regulations as this requires Ministerial and Parliamentary input. DBCA are going to compile a range of recommendations to the Minister for amendment. These recommendations will be presented to us at another workshop on August 12th. However, the timeline for change remains uncertain.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, DISABILITY SERVICES AND ELECTORAL AFFAIRS

ASN has been fortunate enough to have an audience with the Minister's policy advisors and the Director General of DBCA on July 27th to further these issues and reinforce the point that much needed changes to the Act and Regulations require Ministerial input. At this meeting we pointed out the danger to the fledgling plantation industry caused by the over burdensome paperwork and unworkable regulatory framework currently in place. To our great relief, the Minister's staff also acknowledged that the current situation is flawed. This was the first time we have had any acknowledgement of the issues.

Due to COVID 19 and the desire for economic stimulus, the Minister has decided to review the situation and welcomes suggested changes. However there does not seem to be any room for removing cultivated sandalwood from the "specifically controlled" legislation. Theft and illegal trade is still occurring in the wild harvest sector and the Government is adamant they will not consider this suggestion.

As ASN, along with the Co-Op, will be attending the next DBCA workshop we asked the Director General for the opportunity for participants to have direct input into the recommendations, rather than DBCA simply compiling them alone and presenting them to us. This request was received positively.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR GROWER REGISTRATION

As we had expressed our grievances, we also wanted to outline what we think is the solution to these problems.

We suggested that growers should be registered producers, as with most other agricultural commodities. At present no such opportunity to "exist" as a grower is available. We propose the following broad framework:

- When a licence is issued, it would be to a registered grower with a Property Identification Number (PIC) and a Grower Registration Number (GRN). These numbers will accompany all documentation unique to each grower. The licence/registration allows all the activities under the regulations that currently require an individual licence.
- This would allow the development of an internet portal, (and a smart phone app which would be very useful in regard to the STF's and any amendments), whereby growers log on, fill in the relevant section for the activity they wish to conduct and submit. A system such as this is used by Co-Operative Bulk Handling and works very well. It is also similar to sheep and wool producer systems. DBCA could audit this portal at their discretion and we could get on with our plantation management in a much clearer and simpler way.
- All relevant activities would be listed allowing operating in real time, instead of the long drawn out system that currently exists while waiting for DBCA response.

If any members have further suggestions or have encountered any other issues that they feel need addressing, please let us know.

Bruce Storer
ASC Secretary

2020 SANDALWOOD NUT HARVEST ESTIMATES

While the current season may be providing some challenges for cropping and livestock farmers, there have been reports in from members in the Mount Marshall and Koorda shires that they are expecting an above average nut harvest this year. We have been fielding enquiries from several groups interested in buying nuts for processing and for seeding new plantations over the last twelve months. Please send in an indication of what you are estimating you will be able to harvest this year to the email addresses listed above.

INTERESTING SANDALWOOD RESEARCH

[Stimulation of Western Australian Sandalwood \(*Santalum spicatum*\) oil production using multiple treatments](#)

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Date of Award

2019

Degree Type

Thesis

Degree Name

Master of Science (Environmental Management)

School

School of Science

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Abstract

Sandalwood is an important international commodity, recognised for its aromatic oil which is a key ingredient in many fragrances and cosmetics. Western Australian (WA) sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) is known to be a cheaper alternative for the superior Indian sandalwood (*Santalum album*) as it has a lower oil content and lower quality oil. The natural stocks of *S. album* have declined due to illegal poaching, mismanagement, and disease. WA sandalwood's natural stands have also reduced due to historical mismanagement. As a result, WA sandalwood (*S. spicatum*) has been established in plantations in the southern half of WA to attempt to meet the demands of the sandalwood industry. Plantation WA sandalwood is promoted to farmers as agroforestry, with the promise of economic and environmental benefits. While these benefits are attractive, sandalwood has an estimated 25 year rotation. This research aimed to determine the effect of physical and chemical treatments on oil production and heartwood formation in WA sandalwood, with the aim being to increase oil production, thus allowing the time between establishment and harvesting to be reduced. This study was conducted over three plantations in the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia; 'Sandawindy', 'Kylie Reserve', and 'Brookton'. At each site, four treatments were applied: a dowel soaked with the plant hormone Methyl Salicylate (MeSA) and inserted into the tree (Treated Dowel treatment), a dowel with no MeSA inserted into the tree (Blank Dowel treatment), a drill hole left empty (Empty Drill treatment), and a section of bark removed from the tree (Bark Removed treatment), as well as a group of trees left as a control for comparison. The Blank Dowel and Empty Drill treatments were established to determine if any significant increases of sandalwood oil in the Treated Dowel treatment were a result of the MeSA, the foreign dowel, or drilling into

the tree. The Bark Removed treatment was used to mimic dry-sidedness; a condition that occurs naturally in the Rangelands of WA as a result of sun scald. The sandalwood trees were measured and treated in November of 2016. Plantations were divided into 30 evenly sized blocks per site, with 6 replicate blocks allocated to each treatment and control group. Two replicate blocks for every treatment and control group at each plantation were harvested in November of 2017, and all trees were remeasured. Of the approximate 300 trees harvested, 150 were cored using a 12 mm auger drill. These core samples were analysed for oil yield and composition at Wescorp's laboratory. The total oil was measured and analysed, as well as the oil constituents α -santalol, β -santalol, farnesol, nuciferol, and β -bisabolol oil compositions (percentage) and yield (%w/w). All trees that were harvested were cut into 8 discs measuring 25 mm each, and the percentage of heartwood area at each height was measured and recorded. All data was statistically analysed using a univariate general linear model. There was no treatment that consistently increased total oil or oil component yields, qualities, or heartwood area percentages. The Empty Drill treatment resulted in more oil production than the control group on the most occasions, however it did not consistently increase oil production. This showed that the presence of MeSA did not have a significant effect on oil production, and the physical wounding of the tree had the overall greatest effect. The Kylie Reserve plantation showed low oil yield and low heartwood area percentages compared to the Sandawindy and Brookton plantations, although also showed the highest oil yields. This research, while not showing significant increases in oil production for the different treatments used, has given a promising indication that a longer time between treatment and harvesting could influence the oil production. Further research extending this study should be conducted to give more information on the effect of the treatments on oil production.

Recommended Citation

Smith, P. (2019). *Stimulation of Western Australian Sandalwood (Santalum spicatum) oil production using multiple treatments.* <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/2202>



Australian Sandalwood Network has 5 'nut wizards' for hire by ASN and ASC members. The nut wizard takes out much of the back-breaking work involved in collecting sandalwood nuts off the ground.

A refundable deposit of \$100 is required with no charge for the actual hire.

To Hire please contact Bethan Lloyd on 9574 5882 or email exec@sandalwood.org.au

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