

Public submission

AL VIRTUE

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Submission

Al Virtue's Ethical Firewood Sales – NE NSW

Established in the early 1980s, Al Virtue's Ethical Firewood business, based in the Lismore region, is now being operated by a second generation family member.

The business is based on sourcing sustainable and ethical timber, products we have found we can only source from sawmills. We do not harvest our own product from public or private forests.

We ensure that the product we use has an accredited process and is legally and properly harvested and processed at the local mills.

Many of our customers will ask lots of questions before they buy firewood from us. They make it very clear to me that they will only use ethically sourced firewood.

Most of our customers are living in the wider region, in places like Nimbin and Repentance Creek, where they are living the off grid lifestyle, relying on solar for their energy supply and using firewood for cooking, heating and hot water.

If the supply of timber to mills was curtailed or closed, then my customers would be severely disadvantaged and not have access to home cooking and hot water.

We have one full time employee and two part time employees operating the business.

More than 50% of our operating expenses are paid to local businesses and services. We deliberately like to support the business in our local community.

As I am travelling around the wider Lismore region, I see the huge forests full of well managed trees and wonder why comments are made about the forests being "bulldozed down" or chipped and exported because I visit these mills and many of the forests in the region and I know that is not the case.

There should be more recycling and reclaiming of hardwood timbers from disused buildings and infrastructure like abandoned or closed railway lines and viaducts. I have tried to obtain timber from the closed railways up in this region but the timber was simply sold to the highest bidder without understanding how those timbers were to be used or considering closing the loop locally.

My business operates knowing that the forests on the North Coast are sustainably managed, harvested and regenerated and that the mill off cuts and low quality waste product are being used to produce essential low cost domestic hot water and home cooked meals for my off grid customers.