

Volunteer Tuart planting, 2020

Welcome to your tuart forest

Let me explain to you for a few moments the significance of this forest, its history, the recent past and with your help a possible future.

Tuart trees formed this forest many thousands of years ago. The virgin Tuart forest was a magnificent forest and can be restored and managed for all of its values in less time than it took to severely damage it. Tuarts have persisted despite incredible recent human negative intervention and disturbance of this very special biosphere. The original forest was described as an open tall forest, park-like in appearance, with grass up to a horse's wither. Horses could be galloped through this magnificent open English park like forest.

In less than 200 years this tuart forest that once covered 110,000 hectares has now been reduced to 3,300 hectares, only 3% of the original area. This once virgin tuart forest has been progressively cleared for agriculture, urbanisation, clearing for public utility infrastructure and more recently simple neglect.

Indigenous people lived on and protected this land in harmony with the tuarts and the companion biodiversity for thousands of years. The tuart forest provided for their food, fuel, shelter and spiritual needs while maintaining habitat for many unique plants, animals, birds and an abundance of natural biodiversity.

190 years ago European settlers arrived very near to this spot and because of a relatively safe anchorage and estuary access to the ocean, the area stocked with an abundance of natural resources including the magnificent tuart forest; This area became one of the successful European settlements. In the belief that this land must be fertile if it could grow trees of this size it would surely grow food, together with a demand for timber around the developing world and the settlers' need for food production and income they set about clearing the tuart trees to further develop farms. The resulting timber produced was exported and started a trading economy. Life was tough, remote and stressful. There was very little food and even less money. For 60 years this practice continued without regulation.

In 1903 the WA government of the day became concerned for the future of this tuart forest and held a royal commission of inquiry. This resulted in the decision to buy back these properties to protect the remnant tuart forest.

This area we are going to plant today was once granted to a Mr Lochart and was one of the properties purchased by the government of the day. This piece of land still carries his name. Once repurchased by the government, it was undecided as to what to do with the land and once again it was leased back to farmers to graze cattle and to continue selective timber harvesting.



During the period between 1906 and 1916 the government was still concerned and employed a French forester Mr. Charles Lane–Poole to develop a management model based on European forest management science. Lane-Poole wrote the Forest Act and Regulations for WA which was passed by parliament in 1918 in the dying days of the first world war. During this period there was a realisation that WA would not be self-sufficient in wood based products unless fast growing softwood trees were introduced. Research to identify suitable softwood species and establishment techniques commenced in Ludlow during the 1920's.

The following years up until 1945 saw depression and the Second World War. All resources including tuart timber in WA were heavily utilised to provide jobs and export income. It was during this post war period the results of softwood establishment trials were accepted and the search for land to plant commenced. Because the Lochart block had been previously cleared it was decided to replant it to softwood. By the year 2000 the pine trees had matured and were clear felled. Unfortunately the land then remained fallow apart from some very small unmanaged scattered ash bed plantings. In 2018 the Ludlow Tuart Forest Restoration Group formed and became the first serious public volunteer tuart forest restoration organisation and carried out their first planting of 16,500 tuart seedlings across 17 hectares with the help of over 400 school children, parents and friends.

Understanding the tuart forest history supports the present public desire to return this remnant forest to its original magnificent tuart dominant position, thus providing an opportunity to restore to some degree this world only biosphere and its dependant ecosystems and biodiversity.

Can you imagine a tall forest 45 meters high with tree crowns touching and dappled light filtering through, a forest full of life, birds, small animals, and an abundance of biodiversity? What you are going to create today is the beginning of the restoration of this area of forest to once again become a closed canopy tall tuart forest. This restoration will be surprisingly quick in terms of forest regeneration. Within the next 40 years the trees you plant today will have reached a top height of 30 meters and will have closed canopy. At this stage, to hasten the restoration process, some trees will be thinned to allow endemic understory plants to be reintroduced under the protection of the new forest canopy. To regrow this forest to its full potential will take at least 100 years starting with re introduction of tuart seedlings today.

Can I ask you to think of 10 reasons why forests are important to your life and 10 forest based products you rely on in your everyday life? Write them down?

Thank you for being here, listening, reading and importantly taking an active role in forest regeneration by planting tuart seedlings.

Des Donnelly.
Retired Forester.
On behalf of LTFRG.
14.05.2020.