

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

Australia–Laos Forestry Capacity Building and Training project

(8/11/2011)

President of The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA), Dr Peter Volker and Dr Neville Mendham Crawford Fund Coordinator for Tasmania, will today present representatives of the Government of Lao PDR with certificates acknowledging their participation in the Australia–Laos Forestry Capacity Building and Training project.

The project, which the IFA is funding in collaboration with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Crawford Fund (CF) aims to strengthen professional links between Australian and Laotian foresters through exchange of professional forester visits to both countries.

Dr Volker said the project will help Laos improve approaches to forest management and reduce illegal trade in wood and wildlife.

“The program has been a great success with Laotian representatives benefitting from presentations given by visiting and practicing experts in forest management and policy development. Topics have included Australian forest management, certification and chain-of-custody, research and development, market development, regulations, law enforcement and governance.”

Dr Volker said the remainder of the Tasmanian program would involve a visit to Forestry Tasmania headquarters and a tour of a private forestry project in the north-east. The group travels to Queensland this weekend where it will conclude its program on November 19th.

“The private forestry component will highlight the role private forestry can play in achieving biodiversity and profitable wood production, which is a new concept in Laos given their Government recently assumed full responsibility for sustainable forestry management through the Department of Forest Inspection” Dr Volker said.

Presentations today will also be made by Dr Neville Mendham, Coordinator of the Crawford Fund Tasmania.

Dr Volker said the capacity building project had focused on three major areas: 1) improving approaches to sustainable forest management practices, 2) strengthening compliance and governance approaches and processes and 3) improving supply chain efficiencies for both state and private forest resources.

“Lao PDR is one of the world’s poorest and least developed countries. Regionally, Lao is forest-rich but generally it is a poor nation, so forest management and utilisation is an important part of the Government’s development policies and a vital source of wealth. The Capacity Building Project is a commitment that reflects the goals of the International Year of Forests.”

Presentations will be made in the Forestry Tasmania Dome, 79 Melville St Hobart at 6 p.m. today (Tuesday) November 8th, 2011.

Further information: Aidan Flanagan (Program Coordinator for project) 0438 386 108 or Peter Volker 0418 125 319