



## 2024 Property Rights Australia Conference & Annual General Meeting

**Mick Harrington, Executive Officer  
Forest & Wood Communities Australia**



The 2024 PRA Conference will bring the lessons that we can all learn from the forestry and commercial fishing sectors, two critical primary industries that have suffered a great deal from poorly conceived government policy.

The presentations will not just dwell in the past but also provide thoughts to strengthen agriculture influence so to improve government policy.

Mick Harrington provides an insight of his background and focus in his current role in this article – ‘Opinion: Mick Harrington – the fight is far from finished’.

Extracts, “My life and that of my forebears has been inextricably linked with the timber industry with my grandfather (also named Mick) cutting sleepers and firewood in the Red Gum Plains of East Gippsland, my father who ran a red gum firewood business for over a decade and now myself running a firewood supply business in Gippsland. I believe if we continue to promote our messaging across society, we can illustrate the disingenuous, flawed and factually incorrect thinking of the activist class and dissuade academics that approach the debate with ulterior motives. Simultaneously we must rail against government decisions that either cave into this vocal minorities thinking or that ally with it directly. The fight for our communities and our industry is far from finished – with Northern NSW set to be the next battleground against the activist elite.”

**Margaret Stevenson  
Commercial Fishing Advocate**



Margaret has helped her husband, Graham (a commercial fisher in Queensland for the past 52 years) in running their small seafood business from Burnett Heads supplying seafood predominantly to the Sydney Fish Market for the restaurant market. In the 38 years since they married, Margaret has been an occasional deckhand, secretary, office manager, and business partner as well as mother to the couple’s family of 10 children.

Having grown up in a rural area and having worked as bookkeeper for a farm machinery supplier, her understanding of primary industries helped her to understand similar issues within the fishing industry.

So, for the past 20-25 years, Margaret has also been involved in representing commercial fishers’ perspectives on many significant issues and in various capacities – in industry representative committees, as the industry flood recovery officer after the 2010-11 floods, representing Australian women in seafood and Queensland commercial fishermen at the Small Scale Fisheries Congress in

Merida, Mexico in 2014, and representing industry on government consultative working groups until the end of 2018.

With her husband's recent retirement due to the latest Fisheries Reform process, Margaret is now in the process of finalising the closure of their business in preparation for spending more time visiting their children, 18 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren.

**Judy Plath**  
**Bundaberg based Farmer**



Judy Plath is a member of a farming family south of Bundaberg and has seen firsthand the impact of endless government regulatory action on agriculture and small businesses.

Judy has been actively involved in a number of campaigns to protect the future of agriculture in her region, including a fight to stop coal seam gas mining, the fight to save Paradise Dam and, more recently, the fight to protect prime agricultural land and underground aquifers from a proposed coal mine in the Bundaberg region.

Judy is passionate about supporting farmers in their efforts to feed and clothe our nation and believes strongly that farmers should have a recognised 'right to farm'.

She believes it is time for agriculture to change the way it lobbies government and interacts with the community if it wishes to have a viable and profitable future in Australia.

**Jim Willmott**  
**PRA Chairman**



Jim Willmott, originally from Perth, Western Australia, spent his formative years on a small crops and beef cattle farm in regional Queensland, fostering a deep passion for agriculture. After completing post-tertiary studies at the University of Queensland's Gatton Campus, he embarked on a distinguished public service career, with postings in various regional locations including Blackall, Longreach, Emerald, and Rockhampton, before assuming a senior policy position in Brisbane.

Jim's contributions to public service earned him recognition, including being nominated as "Citizen of the Year" by Emerald Shire Council and receiving accolades such as the "Mark of Achievement

Medal" from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the prestigious "Premiers Award" from Peter Beattie for his services to rural and regional communities.

Currently, Jim balances his work in biosecurity consulting for both local governments and private clients with running a successful beef enterprise in the South Burnett Region. Driven by his passion for rural Australia, he has spearheaded numerous initiatives aimed at safeguarding the rights of farmers and their properties. Jim is actively involved in various community organisations, advocating against government and commercial entities that infringe upon people's livelihoods and property rights. He now leads PRA, a grassroots organisation dedicated to supporting local communities facing threats to their property rights and ensuring their voices are heard.