

Submission to the Review of the Tasmanian Regional Forestry Agreement

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”Deforestation decreases biodiversity and access to clean water, and increases soil erosion and the release of carbon into the atmosphere.”

My name is Maria Ilona Elizabeth Riedl and I am taking this opportunity to submit to the 5 yearly review of the Tasmanian RET agreement. Though at present I don't live in Tasmania, we have a house in Hobart where we intend to retire to one day.



I have decided, rather than reinventing the wheel, to write this submission using articles and reports I have found that all point to an attack on old growth and regrowth native forests, which are habitat to numerous endangered and threatened species. These article I have found are regarding the RFA, regarding CAR Reserve System, regarding the huge effort to delist the newly declared Tasmanian World Heritage Areas, because of a crazy politically motivated election promise. I am also highlighting the rejection by this government of the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement which took over 4 years of negotiations and though parties didn't get everything they wanted, it was a landmark agreement, which because yet another crazy politically motivated promise by the present Tasmanian government was thrown out without any thought what-so-ever. I also highlight the newest ridiculous, ill thought proposal, attached to the RFA, where the present government at Commonwealth level and some States seek to include the burning of; so-called, loosely defined, forestry waste for fuel, this because they can't sell wood chips and the subsidies are simply not enough to ensure the survival of the fading, non profit forestry industries. This is simply unbelievable and unacceptable as forest

have many functions that are far more beneficial than simply using any excuse to burn them for biomass/fuel. We have solar, wind and wave for this!

1. Background on RFA Agreements:

In [Australia](#), the [Regional Forest Agreement](#) (RFA) attempted to prevent the [clearfelling](#) of defined "Old Growth Forests". This led to struggles over what constitutes "Old Growth". For example in Western Australia, the [timber](#) industry tried to limit the area of Old Growth in the [karri](#) forests of the Southern Forests Region; this led to the creation of the [Western Australian Forests Alliance](#), the splitting of the Liberal Government of Western Australia and the election of the [Gallop](#) Labor Government. Old Growth Forests in this region have now been placed inside [National Parks](#). A small proportion of Old Growth Forest also exists in South-West Australia, and is protected by a Federal laws from logging, which hasn't occurred there for more than twenty years.

The [Regional Forest Agreements](#) are 20 year plans for the conservation and sustainable management of [Australia's native forests](#), and are intended to provide certainty to commercial forestry operations while protecting environmental values.^[1] The 10 RFA's were progressively signed between 1997 and 2001. The RFA process grew out of the 1992 National Forest Policy Statement.

The Agreements relies on a mix of community and industry consultation combined with scientific research. While the Agreements are supported by [forestry](#) industry, they are widely criticised by [environmentalist](#) groups.

In Tasmania, a forestry operation that is undertaken in accordance with an RFA is not required obtain environmental approvals otherwise required by the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act](#), nor to protect rare or threatened species listed in the CAR Reserve System. A [conclusive presumption](#) was added to the agreement in 2007 which states "The Parties agree that the CAR Reserve System, established in accordance with this Agreement, and the application of management strategies and management prescriptions developed under Tasmania's Forest Management Systems, protect rare and threatened fauna and flora species and Forest Communities". **That is, the threatened species have simply been declared to be protected without regard for actual circumstances.**

2. The following is just some more background information and it really highlights some of the biased actions both political and otherwise which threaten the RFA Agreements both at Commonwealth level as well as at State level-specifically relating to abuse of the EPBC Act which allowed states to sign agreements for maintaining specific environmental goals of protection (in Tasmania):

The tragedy of Tasmania's forests

BY RICHARD FLANAGAN



Tasmania, Styx Valley, January 2001. © T Taylor/Wikimedia Commons

This story begins with a Tasmanian man fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*) for sale in a London nursery. Along with the healthy price tag, some £160, is a note: "This tree fern has been salvage harvested in accordance with a management plan approved by the Governments of Tasmania and the Commonwealth of Australia." If you were to believe both governments, that plan ensures that Tasmania has a sustainable logging industry - one which, according to the federal minister responsible for forests, Eric Abetz, is "the best managed in the world". The truth is otherwise. The man fern - possibly several centuries old - comes from native forests destroyed by a logging industry that was recently found to be illegal by the Federal Court of Australia. It comes either from primeval rainforest that has been evolving for millennia or from wet eucalypt forests, some of which contain the mighty *Eucalyptus regnans*. These aptly named kings of trees are the tallest hardwood trees and flowering plants on Earth; some are more than 20 metres in girth and 90 metres in height. The forests are being destroyed in Tasmania, in spite of widespread community opposition and increasing international concern.

Clear felling, as the name suggests, first involves the complete felling of a forest by chainsaws and skidders. Then, the whole area is torched, the firing started by helicopters dropping incendiary devices made of jellied petroleum, commonly known as napalm. The resultant fire is of such ferocity it produces mushroom clouds visible from considerable distances. In consequence, every autumn, the island's otherwise most beautiful season, china-blue skies are frequently nicotine-scummed, an inescapable reminder that clearfelling means the total destruction of ancient and unique forests. At its worst, the smoke from these burn-offs has led to the closure of schools, highways and tourist destinations.

In the Styx Valley, in the south-west, the world's last great unprotected stands of old-growth *Eucalyptus regnans* are being reduced to piles of smouldering ash. Over 85% of Tasmania's old-growth *regnans* forests are gone, and it is estimated that fewer than 13,000 hectares of

these extraordinary trees remain in their old-growth form. Almost half of them are to be clearfelled. Most will end up as paper in Japan.

In logging coupes around Tasmania, exotic rainforest trees such as myrtle, sassafras, leatherwood and celery-top pine - extraordinary, exquisite trees, many centuries old, some of which are found nowhere else - are often just left on the ground and burnt.

The hellish landscape that results from clearfelling - akin to a Great War battlefield - is generally turned into large monocultural plantations of either radiata pine or *Eucalyptus nitens*, sustained by such a heavy program of fertilisers and pesticides that water sources for some local communities have been contaminated by Atrazine, a controversial herbicide linked with cancer and banned in much of Europe. Blue-dyed carrots soaked in 1080 poison are laid on private plantations to kill native grazing animals that pose a threat to tree seedlings. The slaughter that results sees not only possums, wallabies and kangaroos die slowly, in agony, but other species - including wombats, bettongs and potoroos - killed in large numbers, despite being officially protected species.

In 2003 an ageing forester, Bill Manning, was subpoenaed to testify in front of an Australian Senate committee investigating the Tasmanian forestry industry. He methodically began to unravel a tale of environmental catastrophe, of industry connivance and government complicity. His detailed evidence suggested that the forestry industry was not only systematically destroying unique forests, but poisoning the very fabric of Tasmanian politics and life.

No greenie hardliner, Manning was a man who worked for 30 years in the Tasmanian forests and who believes they ought to be logged, but logged so that they remain for the future. Yet he alleged to the Senate committee that forestry management had been corrupted. At the hearing, he painted a picture of illegal destruction on a scale so vast that it was transforming the landscape of Tasmania. Branding what was happening "an ecological disaster", Manning talked of how an "accelerated and unaccountable logging industry" was destroying wholesale native forests "which are unique in the world for their flora and fauna". "The clearfelling is out of control," he told the senators. "The scale of clearfelling in Tasmania is huge."

A whispering campaign about Bill Manning's state of mind began, and in the four years since he ended a career that he loved, by standing up for what he believed, nothing has changed - except for the worse. Today, Tasmania is the only Australian state that clearfells its rainforests. While the rest of Australia has either ended, or is ending, the logging of old-growth forests, Tasmania is the only state where it is secretly planned to accelerate the destruction of native forests, driven by the greed for profit that can be made from woodchips. As with any epidemic of madness, there sometimes seems no end to the horror. Among Tasmania's many unique plants and animals is the endangered giant freshwater crayfish, one of the largest invertebrates in the world. Although technically protected, its very future is threatened by the frenzy of logging surrounding the creeks where it lives. When a government-appointed expert panel recommended buffer zones of forest be preserved to protect the crayfish, these zones were reduced to a bare minimum, and the areas continue to be logged. "Clearfelling is going on at an incredible rate in their habitat," the crayfish expert Todd Walsh says. "It's going berserk."

Tasmania is an extraordinary land, one that many hoped might become, in the words of the legendary landscape photographer Olegas Truchanas, "a shining beacon in a dull, uniform and largely artificial world". Its remoteness, its wildness, its unique natural world - all seemed to offer the possibility of a prosperous and good future to a state that had for a century been the poorest in the Australian Commonwealth. Instead, over the past three decades Tasmania has mortgaged its future to the woodchipping industry, which is today dominated by one

company: Gunns Ltd. And it is Gunns - not the Tasmanian people - that has been the beneficiary of the destruction of Tasmania's unique forests.

Though Gunns was founded in Tasmania in 1875, it was not until 1989, when it became part of the written history of corruption in Tasmania, that many Australians first came to hear of the company, then still one of several Tasmanian timber firms. In that year the then chairman of Gunns, Eddie Rouse, became concerned that the election of a Labor-Green Tasmanian government with a one-seat majority might affect his logging profits. Rouse attempted to bribe a Labor member, Jim Cox, to cross the floor, thereby bringing down the government and clearing the way for the pro-logging former premier Robin Gray and the Liberal Party to resume power. Cox went to the police and the plot was exposed; a royal commission and Rouse's fall from grace and imprisonment ensued. But Gunns continued. Today it is a corporation worth more than a billion dollars, the largest company in Tasmania, with an effective monopoly of the island's hardwood logging, and a darling of the Australian stock market.

Yet Gunns remains haunted by the Rouse scandal. The company's board continues to have among its directors former associates of the late Eddie Rouse. The 1991 royal commission found that director David McQuestin, whose friendship with Rouse it characterised as "obsequious", was not "unlawfully involved as a principal offender" with the bribery attempt, although his "compliance with Rouse's direction in the matter was 'highly improper'" - a "glaring breach of the requisite standards of commercial morality". Robin Gray is also now a director of Gunns; the royal commission found that he "knew of and was involved with Rouse in Rouse's attempt to bribe Cox", and that while his conduct was not unlawful, it was "improper, and grossly so". John Gay, Gunns' managing director in 1989 and now its managing director and executive chairman, was cleared by the royal commission of any involvement with the bribery attempt.

In a dissembling world ever more given to corporate deference to a green image, the company shows an often-unexpected candour. Gunns makes no secret of its enmity towards conservationists and conservation groups. Gunns plans to destroy more, rather than less, Tasmanian native forest. Gunns makes no apologies for what this means. "How do you feel about protected species dying for your business?" John Gay was once asked on national television. "Well, there's too many of them," he replied, "and we need to keep them at a reasonable level." And while the figures for total woodchip production since 2000 are officially secret - like so much else in Tasmania - Gunns' own evidence in support of the pulp mill it proposes for the north of the state reveals that the company plans to double woodchipping, from its present annual levels of approximately 3.5 million tonnes to 7 million tonnes over the next decade.

To evade the ever-growing public anger, the woodchipping industry has had to exercise an ever-stronger control over Tasmanian life. Both major parties in Tasmania, and much of the state's media, frequently give the appearance of existing only as clients of the woodchippers. The state's interest and that of the woodchipping industry are now so thoroughly identified as one and the same that anyone questioning the industry's actions is attacked by leading government figures as a traitor to Tasmania. And it is not only the forests that have been destroyed by this industry. Its poison has seeped into every aspect of Tasmanian life: jobs are threatened, careers destroyed, people driven to leave. And in recent years, its influence has extended further, so that now its activities are endorsed nationally by both the prime minister, John Howard, and the Opposition leader, Kevin Rudd.

Huge money is being made out of destroying native forests, but to maintain what to many is an obscene practice there has evolved a culture of secrecy, shared interest and intimidation that seems to firmly bind the powerful in Tasmania. When the actress Rebecca Gibney, who

moved to Tasmania two years ago to raise her family, said in a television interview that she would leave the state if Gunns' proposed pulp mill was built, the former Liberal Party candidate and bottle-shop owner Sam McQuestin made headlines by publicly attacking her as "serial complainer" whose family made no contribution to the Tasmanian economy and who had no "right to tell the rest of us how to live our lives". McQuestin's family is well known for its contribution: his father, David, is a Gunns director. The attack on Rebecca Gibney was but a public example of something far more widespread and insidious. I witnessed a senior ALP politician make it clear that yet another Tasmanian was no longer welcome in the clearfelling state when the local corporate-communications consultant Gerard Castles wrote an article in a newspaper questioning the government's policy on old-growth logging. "The fucking little cunt is finished," the politician said in front of me and my 12-year-old daughter. "He will never work here again."

To question, to comment adversely, is to invite the possibility of ostracism and unemployment, and the state is full of those who pay a high price for their opinion on the forests, the blackballed multiplying with the blackened stumps. It is commonplace to meet people who are too frightened to speak publicly of their concerns about forestry practices, because of the adverse consequences they perceive this might have for their careers and businesses. Due to the forest battle, a subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) fear has entered Tasmanian public life; it stifles dissent, avoids truth.

And how can it be otherwise? The great majority of Tasmanians appear to be overwhelmingly opposed to old-growth logging, and only by the constant crushing of opposing points of view, and the attempted silencing and smearing of those who put them, can the practice continue. And so, nearly two decades after its then chairman failed in his attempt to corrupt the state parliament, Gunns now seems so powerful that Tasmanians joke that their government is the 'gunnerment', and leading national politicians of all persuasions acknowledge that the real power in Tasmania is not the government but Gunns itself.

This goes further than the sizeable donations Gunns makes to both major parties, both in Tasmania and nationally. It goes beyond Gunns' role in election campaigns, such as the \$486,000 spent on aggressive political advertising in the 2004 federal election by the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania (FIAT), of which Gunns is the largest member. "A lot of people are intimidated by the employment side of the [Tasmanian forestry] industry," the prominent Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan, from New South Wales, has said, "including some politicians."

But who can blame even the powerful for being scared? The former Tasmanian Liberal leader Bob Cheek recalls how "the state's misguided forestry policy was ruthlessly policed by Gunns", how fearful the politicians were of the forest lobby and what he describes as their "hitmen". In a cowed society, the Tasmanian government often gives the impression of being little more than a toadying standover man for its corporate godfather, willing to undertake any action, no matter how degrading, to help those with the real power.

When, in 2004, the Wyena farmers Howard and Michelle Carpenter had themselves and their property directly sprayed by a helicopter with Atrazine meant for an adjacent Gunns plantation, poisoning their water supply, Gunns' only response was to send the couple two bottles of spring water. Later, when the story became a public scandal, they provided the Carpenters with a water tank which a few months later they removed, though the Carpenter's water bore remained poisoned. To reassure the public that there was no cause for concern, the then water minister, Steve Kons, fronted a media conference at which he loyally drank a glass of water tainted with Atrazine. Steve Kons is now Tasmania's deputy premier.

According to the former federal Labor leader Mark Latham, "They [Gunns] run the state Labor Government, they run [Labor Premier] Lennon ... and old Lennon there, he wouldn't scratch himself unless the guy who heads up Gunns told him to." Latham would know: after all, his own bid to be prime minister ended when he came up against Gunns in the 2004 election. Latham was no conservationist, but the growing national outcry over Tasmania's forests, driven by a long campaign by conservation groups, led him in the week before the election to propose a bold plan to end the logging of the island's old-growth forests, a plan that included an \$800-million compensation package for logging workers. Quite extraordinarily, the package was rejected by Tasmanian Labor.

Two days later, the Liberal prime minister, John Howard, flew into Tasmania to announce the indefinite continuation of old-growth logging, along with more extensive subsidies to the logging industry and, as a sop to the green vote, the protection of some areas of old growth. A few areas were victories. Much was a con: areas that were either already reserved; or, as Terry Edwards of FIAT admitted about the north Styx, very difficult to log; or, as in the Weld or the Florentine, later - in an act of arch cynicism - to be logged anyway.

In the most extraordinary images of that election, Howard was cheered by 2000 logging workers at a rally in Launceston, supported by the powerful Construction, Forest, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). Within the week Howard would be returned to government, and within a year some of those same workers would be forced out of the industry by Gunns breaking contracts, and looking for new employment in a workforce ravaged by the toughest anti-union laws in Australia's history - introduced by the man they had cheered on to victory.

"We seem to get on better with the Liberals than we do with Labor at the moment,"

Tasmania's premier, Paul Lennon, told a journalist a few weeks after federal Labor had suffered one of its worst defeats.

The conservationists had foundered and, with Howard's crushing victory, Gunns now had a federal government that felt electorally rewarded for taking the company's side. Gunns had too a state government so committed to it that seemingly no issue in Tasmania could be decided without first being held up to see whether it was good or bad for the old-growth logging industry. And it left federal Labor so terrified of ever touching the issue again that when Kevin Rudd assumed the leadership of the party in 2006, one of his first actions was to express support for the Tasmanian logging industry. But then, as Mark Latham ruefully admitted, "No policy issue or set of relationships better demonstrates the ethical decline and political corruption of the Australian Labor movement than Tasmanian forestry."

The dogs were off the leash and Gunns was now at its most powerful. Within months it made a move that was widely viewed as an attempt to cripple the conservation movement, the last remaining impediment to its ambitions. On 14 December 2004, Gunns filed a 216-page, \$6.3-million claim against a group of conservationists and organisations who became known as the Gunns 20. The writ was an extraordinary document that sought to sue a penniless grandmother who had opposed logging in her district; a national political leader, Senator Bob Brown; a doctor who had raised public-health concerns about woodchip piles; prominent conservationists; Australia's leading wilderness-conservation organisation, the Wilderness Society; a film-maker; and several day protesters.

All were joined in what was alleged to be a conspiracy guilty of the crime of corporate vilification. The writ presented a tale of a group of people together seeking, through a series of actions as diverse as protesters chaining themselves to logging machinery to the lobbying of Japanese paper companies, to destroy Gunns' profits. The perversity of the action was staggering: with the immense fortune it had made out of destroying Tasmania's forests, Gunns had launched an action that would, if successful, have redefined the practice of democracy as the crime of conspiracy. An Australian would not have been able to criticise,

question or campaign against a corporation, for risk of being bankrupted in legal proceedings brought against them by the richest and most powerful in their society, claiming damage to their corporate interest. No matter how a corporation made its money, be it from tobacco or asbestos or chemicals, all of its actions would have effectively been removed from the realm of public life. Gunns' action was compared with the legal standover tactics that prevails in such countries as Singapore, where those engaged in political opposition are bankrupted and then jailed through such a process of litigation.

If its legal ramifications were enormous but unrealised, its political impact was immediate. While the writ excited a national outcry, garnering comparisons with the McLibel case, in the short term it only served to further intimidate many in Tasmania, and tied up the leading conservation groups and conservationists in a difficult, expensive and all-consuming court case at a moment when Gunns was planning its most controversial action of all. Two days after it issued the writ, Gunns announced its plans for a gigantic \$1.4-billion pulp mill, the biggest infrastructure project in Tasmania's history and one of the biggest pulp mills in the world, to be built 36 kilometres from Launceston.

At first, reassuring commitments were given that Gunn's pulp mill would be environmentally friendly: chlorine-free and primarily using plantation timber. Premier Lennon was adamant that the mill would only go ahead if Gunns could prove to an independent government body, the Resource and Planning Development Commission (RPDC), that their proposal conformed to the world's best environmental standards. The process was to be above politics and the RPDC's decision final. But public concern began to grow when it became clear that Gunns was planning something entirely different to what it had originally announced. Gunns now wanted to build a kraft chlorine-bleaching mill - the type that produce dioxins, some of the most toxic substances known to man - fuelled initially by 80% native-forest woodchips. Then was revealed the shocking news that to feed the pulp mill's gargantuan appetite, Gunns had negotiated a deal (the exact details of which remain secret) with the then Tasmanian forests minister, Bryan Green, that would *double* the level of woodchipping and accelerate the ongoing destruction of Tasmania's native forests for the next 20 years. (In October 2006 Bryan Green was charged with conspiracy over another secret deal, this time with a building accreditation company run by ex-Labor ministers. He denies any wrongdoing and the case continues.)

At the same time, Tasmanians discovered that while the mill was being assessed Paul Lennon was using a wholly owned subsidiary of Gunns, the construction company Hinman, Wright & Manser, to renovate his historic home. It was a curious choice of builder. Hinman, Wright & Manser is known to be less than enthusiastic in its support of unionised labour, and to be a keen proponent of the Howard government's new workplace-relations laws, of which Lennon had publicly been a vociferous critic. More remarkably, the Gunns "construction division" as it is termed on Gunns' website, is an industrial- and civil-works company that advertises itself as specialising in "larger construction work" such as mines, warehouses, concrete plants, schools, courts, remand centres, nursing homes, hospitals, reservoirs, substations, wharf berths, road bridges and woodchip mills, but makes no mention of home renovation. Lennon has never answered questions put at the time about what Hinman, Wright & Manser originally quoted for the job, nor whether there were other quotes. Lennon and Gunns have both subsequently said that Lennon paid for the renovations, though the precise sum has never been revealed. Lennon dismissed any questions on the matter as a painful attack on his family's privacy.

The revelations that have since ensued have not been so easily dismissed. In early January 2007, the head of the RPDC pulp-mill inquiry, Julian Green, and the inquiry's leading

scientific advisor and a national pulp-mill expert, Dr Warwick Raverty, both resigned, both citing political interference. It has become public knowledge that the RPDC found Gunns' own evidence to be riddled with inaccuracies and errors; that levels of dioxins in the mill's outflow were initially underestimated by a factor of 45; and that the mill, as well as failing to address the concerns of the Australian Medical Association (AMA) about ultra-fine particle pollution, also significantly failed to meet at least three official air-pollution guidelines. Senior scientists questioned Gunns' claims that the 64,000 tonnes of treated effluent pouring daily from the mill into the ocean would not harm Bass Strait and its marine life. Gunns' modelling for air pollution in the Tamar Valley was so shoddy that it sometimes fantastically predicted that air pollution would be lower with a pulp mill than without.

Pointing out that "no other pulp mill in the world uses the process Gunns proposes," and that its noxious emissions would pour into a densely populated valley already subject to the worst smog in Tasmania, Raverty has since warned that "the risk of producing unacceptable levels of deadly and persistent chemicals known as organochlorines is too high." Raverty, who works for a subsidiary of the CSIRO and has consistently pointed out that he is speaking in a personal capacity about the mill's pollution risk, has claimed that a Gunns executive rang the CSIRO seeking to pressure the organisation into silencing him. The CSIRO has confirmed that Gunns "expressed concerns". Raverty has since said he would welcome the opportunity to appear before a criminal-justice commission or a royal commission into the process, because there needs to be public scrutiny of the "very unethical activities" of the Tasmanian government.

Though the Tasmanian chapter of the AMA warned Tasmania's political leaders that they would be personally accountable for any health problems resulting from the proposed pulp mill, the leaders were listening not to such dire concerns but rather to the Gunns board, with whom Premier Lennon and his kitchen cabinet met on 25 February. Two days later, Gunns told the Australian Stock Exchange it was "confident the necessary government approvals" for its pulp mill "will be obtained within a timeframe which maintains the commercial value of the project".

That same day, Paul Lennon handed the newly appointed head of the RPDC's pulp-mill assessment panel, the former Supreme Court judge Christopher Wright, a typed timeline laying out his demands. "It was plain as the nose on my face," Wright later said, "that he was trying to please Gunns." Describing it as a "completely inappropriate ... attempt to pressure" him, Wright rejected what he termed an "ultimatum" by Lennon to dump public hearings and wind up the assessment by 31 July or face the RPDC being dumped in favour of legislation fast-tracking the process.

And when a fortnight later Gunns withdrew from the RPDC assessment process, blaming delays which John Gay termed "commercially unacceptable", what was commercially acceptable to Gunns became a political imperative for the Tasmanian government.

That Christopher Wright said most of the delays were Gunns' fault was of no consequence. For in a manner that at least is understandable if onerous to Tasmanians, it is clear that in Tasmania Gunns more or less *is* the law. The woodchippers and their government cronies constantly use the courts against conservationists, but when the courts are used against them the government's response is admirably straightforward: change the law. They changed the law, for example, when Bob Brown sold almost everything he had and took both the Tasmanian and the federal governments to court to prove that under their own laws the logging industry in Tasmania was illegal, because it threatened the survival of endangered species, including the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and the swift parrot. He won, but the government's response was not to enforce the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement to protect those species, but simply to alter it so that logging is once again legal.

Faced with the possibility that the pulp mill might not now meet the RPDC pollution guidelines, Paul Lennon simply rushed an act through parliament to establish an entirely new process that seems certain to ensure the mill will be approved by the end of August this year. Though this contradicted what Lennon had so dogmatically maintained for the previous two years about an impartial process that was above politics, the act (drafted with the input of a Gunns lawyer) tellingly allows for the mill to no longer meet the original pollution guidelines. Public consultation has been dispensed with and, most remarkably - and possibly without precedent in the annals of Westminster legislation - the act explicitly provides that the mill will still go ahead even if it is proven that the consultant assessing the project has been bribed.

It had been uncharacteristic of Lennon to even pretend a process mattered more than an outcome, and it seemed cynicism more of a piece with his predecessor, the late Jim Bacon. A one time Maoist, an upper-middle-class alumni of one of Australia's most exclusive private schools, Melbourne's Scotch College, and later, of one of its most infamous unions, the Victorian Builders' Labourer's Federation (BLF), Bacon was for several years a loyal lieutenant of the BLF's leader, the notorious Norm Gallagher. By the time Gallagher was jailed for taking bribes from developers and his union the subject of a Royal Commission that led to its deregistration, Bacon was ensconced in Tasmania, where the old BLF tactics of espousing a working-class rhetoric while cosying up to the powerful served him well. In 1997 he became leader of the Tasmanian Labor Party.

The following year Bacon was instrumental in brokering the deal that saw the very electoral basis of the Tasmanian parliament altered. Since the 1970s, when the world's first green party was formed in Tasmania, the Greens had been a powerful political minority in Tasmania, securing up to a seventh of parliamentary seats under the island's unique proportional representation system and with it, on occasion, the balance of power.

The 1998 deal was sold to the public as a common-sense measure to reduce the number of parliamentary members. But it was intensely political in effect, because having fewer parliamentarians meant that a higher quota was required by an individual to be elected, thus making it harder for minority parties to win seats and possibly destroying future Green representation - and with it the only real opposition to the woodchipping industry. The former Liberal leader Bob Cheek recalls how Robin Gray, the state's premier in the '80s and now a member of Gunns' board, lobbied him on the night before the vote on the reform. "We've got to stop the Greens, Bob," Gray told him. And they did.

The subsequent election in August 1998 saw the Greens decimated and Jim Bacon's Labor Party triumphant. The Bacon government quickly established itself as the most pro-big-business government Tasmania had ever had. Favoured companies received extraordinary treatment. The privately owned Federal Hotels group, who run the island's two casinos, was awarded a 15-year gaming monopoly - conservatively estimated by Citigroup to be worth \$130 million in licensing revenues - free of charge.

But the greatest winner was Gunns. Its shares were languishing at \$1.40 when the Bacon government came to power. The company's subsequent growth was dizzying. Within four years, it had recorded an increase of 199% in profits. With the acquisition of two rival companies, Gunns took control of more than 85% of logging in Tasmania. Five years after Bacon won government Gunns was worth more than \$1 billion, with shares trading in excess of \$12. It had become both the largest logging company in Australia and the largest hardwood-woodchip exporter in the world, its product flooding in from the state's fallen forests.

The state government, which a century ago paid people to shoot the Tasmanian tiger, now provided every incentive to destroy old-growth forest. One of Bacon's first acts was to make 85,000 hectares of previously "deferred forest" available for logging. Gunns paid only paltry royalties to Forestry Tasmania, the public body charged with getting a commercial return from the crown forests that were the very basis of Gunns' record profits. When in 2003 Gunns posted an after-tax profit of \$74 million, Forestry Tasmania made a hardly impressive \$20 million. By 2005, when Gunns after-tax profit had soared to \$101.3 million, Forestry Tasmania's profit had slumped to \$13.5 million. Its projected profit for 2006-07 is break-even: a return of zero dollars, nothing, to Tasmanian taxpayers on the estimated \$700-million value of its publicly owned forest estate.

But it wasn't just that public forestry resources were being systematically handed over to a single company's shareholders; it was that much of Gunns' profits were coming out of taxpayers' pockets. On private land, Gunns made a second profit from the federal tax breaks that made tree plantations - with which clearfelled native forests were replaced - one of corporate Australia's favourite forms of tax minimisation from the late '90s.

On top of all this, Bacon's government accelerated a familiar pattern of ongoing handouts to an industry that constantly shed jobs, devastated the environment and sought to manipulate the political system. Between 1988 and the present, the Tasmanian forest industry has received a staggering total of \$780 million in taxpayer handouts, \$289 million of it since 2005, much of it being used to facilitate further old-growth logging. If an accounting were possible of the taxpayer-subsidised plantation schemes and added to this sum, the real subsidy paid by the Australian taxpayer to an industry that destroys the nation's heritage would approach a billion dollars.

But then, not the least shocking thing about the destruction of Tasmania's old-growth forests is that the state's logging industry is in the end not a commercially viable industry at all, but a massive parasite on the public purse, an industry as driven by ideological bailouts and hidden subsidies as a Soviet-era pig-iron foundry.

Worse still, at the moment when Tasmania was acquiring a global reputation as an island of exceptional beauty, the forces that would destroy much of the island's unique nature had been unleashed. This sad irony, denied in Tasmania, did not escape the more astute of the world's media: major features began appearing in the *Observer*, *Le Figaro*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *New York Times* - mounting evidence that what was happening in Tasmania was more and more recognised as an environmental catastrophe of global significance. What might be read about Tasmania's forests in New York or Paris, though, was not information found easily in Hobart or Launceston. Apart from a few brave journalists, a generally craven Tasmanian media rarely questioned or challenged the woodchipping industry during these years. The *Launceston Examiner* ran a four-page feature on Gunns' pulp-mill proposal directly lifted from Gunns' advertising. Necessary fictions were repeated until they became accepted as truth: that, for example, the industry's main concern is sawlogs, when even Forestry Tasmania had admitted that sawlogs are chipped, and had been since 1972. The government's own reports reveal that approximately 90% of Tasmania's logged native forest is woodchipped. To this day, the forestry industry and the Tasmanian government withhold key information, fudge definitions of forest types and felling practices, and distort statistics to prevent the truth of old-growth logging becoming publicly known, diverting debate into the dullness of disputed definitions and clashing numbers. It's a familiar tactic of sowing semantic confusion that has worked well for the tobacco and oil industries. Beyond it, forests unique in the world continue to disappear.

Jim Bacon's nickname was 'the Emperor', but the man perceived to be the power behind the throne was his deputy, Paul Lennon. Ill-tempered, badly behaved and brutally effective, his political capacity - like that of so many strong-arm leaders - was too often and too easily dismissed. Lennon made no more apologies for his thuggish behaviour (he once shoved a conservationist up against a wall in the middle of a meeting, an encounter he claims not to remember) than he did his enthusiasm for the old-growth logging industry, or his close friendship with the logging baron John Gay. Anyone taking a first-hand look at Tasmania would, he once said, "see a lot of fucking trees".

When Bacon retired in early 2004 because of terminal cancer, Lennon became premier, and any pretence that Gunns might be reined in within Tasmania came to an end. These days, Gunns is everywhere in Tasmania: there are Gunns shops, Gunns television advertisements, Gunns-sponsored weather bulletins. If you go to watch an AFL game at Tasmania's premier stadium, York Park, you pass through the main entrance, officially and aptly named the Jim Bacon Gates, built by - who else? - a wholly owned subsidiary of Gunns, and come to the Gunns Stand, the largest and most opulently fitted stand in the stadium, much of it paid for, equally aptly, by the Tasmanian government.

With the river of money that had poured in from Tasmania's destroyed forests, Gunns had diversified into businesses in New Zealand and mainland Australia. It set about becoming the main player in the Tasmanian wine industry, with the company itself the dominant producer. That the woodchippers' wines - Tamar Ridge, Coombend, Devils Corner - were not stocked by some shops, bars and restaurants in Hobart because of consumer antipathy was of no concern, for the venture's financial underpinning was the same as for its forestry plantations: tax-minimisation schemes, in which grape-growing qualified for a 100% tax write-off. Yet again, it was Australian taxes at work for Gunns.

Gunns now made no secret of what the cost would be for those who questioned the sanctity of old-growth logging, no matter who they were. During the 2004 federal election, plantation-softwood processor Auspine - a \$200-million forestry company based in South Australia that runs two pine sawmills employing 313 people in the northern Tasmanian town of Scottsdale - incurred John Gay's wrath by having the temerity to put forward a \$450-million plan in which old-growth logging would be ended immediately, but Tasmania's forest industry would be expanded by 900 new jobs. Gay made it clear that Auspine had been very foolish, saying, "Their comments have been extremely damaging to themselves and their future in Tasmania." Two months later Gunns' hardware stores stopped stocking Auspine timber.

Auspine's pine comes from land owned by Forestry Tasmania, but in 1999 a half-share in their trees was sold by Jim Bacon to an American global investment firm, GMO, for \$40 million. In early 2007 it was announced that Auspine had lost its pine supply in a deal that saw the timber go to a new company, FEA, that doesn't even have a sawmill. In this manner over 300 people are to lose their jobs. Though it is the half-owner of the resource, both the state-owned Forestry Tasmania and the Tasmanian government refused to intervene in the negotiations to help Auspine or its workers. When Paul Lennon finally went to Scottsdale, four weeks after the initial announcement, sawmill workers turned their backs on the man who had always boasted that he stood for the jobs of forestry-industry workers. Increasingly, it appeared to many Tasmanians that the only jobs Lennon really cared about were his own and those of the Gunns directors.

Perhaps predictably, one of the last defences seized on in this battle by politicians on six-figure salaries is that they stand solidly with the working class. But Lennon's routine claim that 10,000 jobs are at stake if old-growth logging ends is without substance, and avoids the truth: jobs have been disappearing in old-growth logging for many years, not because of

conservationists but because of mechanisation and Gunns' ability to transfer its losses onto logging workers. While woodchipping destroyed the older labour-intensive sawmill timber industry, the Hampshire woodchip mill in northern Tasmania, the biggest in the southern hemisphere, employs just 12 people. A report in the *Australian Financial Review* in 2004 revealed that the Tasmanian industry in its entirety had shed more than 1200 jobs since 1997. Like Lennon's previously expansive claims - that, for example, ending old-growth logging in Western Australia had left more than 4000 people unemployed, something categorically refuted by the Western Australian government - the figure of 10,000 jobs is not supported. It is more than seven times the number given by the forest industry's own report on employment in the old-growth-logging sector, commissioned by the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania and written by pro-logging academics in 2004. Old-growth logging - as distinct from the rest of the (much larger) forestry industry - was estimated by a Timber Workers for Forests report in the same year to employ only 580 people. Both figures were arrived at before Gunns sent many contractors to the wall in 2006. Under Gunns' tendering system, contractors were already squeezed hard, with a large proportion of their income servicing debt on loans for the heavy machinery necessary for their work.

When it slashed logging contracts by up to 40% to offset a decline in woodchip sales, logging workers for the first time publicly expressed their growing bitterness towards Gunns and the hefty profits it made while their livelihoods vanished. In response, Barry Chipman of Timber Communities Australia (TCA) denied there was growing resentment within the industry towards Gunns. Presenting itself as the grassroots organisation of those it terms the "forest folk", the TCA has from its inception in 1987 actually been the vehicle of the National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI), which is financed by the logging industry. The TCA's support for the Tasmanian logging industry was once described by John Gay as an "invaluable alliance". Invaluable though it may be, the logging industry does put a price on it: in 2002-03, \$723,154 of the TCA's total revenues of \$836,977 came from direct industry contributions. In the same year, Barry Chipman's wages were directly paid by the NAFI. It was "situations like this" Barry Chipman said of Gunns' slashing of contracts, that sorted out the "good operators" from the bad - further incensing those contractors who, acting on Gunns' promises of more work, had taken out bigger loans to purchase better equipment, and now were unable to meet repayments. "Everyone needs to tighten their belt a little bit," Chipman went on. "Any downturn will also be suffered by the company and its shareholders."

But they didn't seem to be suffering much that year at "Launceston's Lavish Lunch", the annual fundraiser of the Launceston branch of the Australian Cancer Research Foundation, held at one of Tasmania's most celebrated historic homes, Entally House. It seems to have been a splendid day for the island's clearfelling contessas, and the Launceston Cancerians - whose committee includes the wives of both John Gay and David McQuestin - later waxed effusively on their website about the event, extending "A big thanks ... to Mr John Gay for opening his house for the function."

Entally House isn't really John Gay's house, of course, just as crown forest isn't really his land. Like the forest, the historic house belonged to the Tasmanian people, but in 2004 the Tasmanian government terminated the National Trust's lease and gave a 20-year lease to Gunns. Plans by Gunns to plant a ten-hectare vineyard in Entally's historic grounds were immediately announced, John Gay declaring that the company was developing a "detailed marketing strategy" for the property, centring on the marketing of its wines. And in this way a unique piece of Australia's heritage became both John Gay's house and a charming marketing platform for Gunns. The public can still visit Entally House which, technically speaking, they still own. It only costs \$8 per adult.

Meanwhile, log-truck driver Gary Coad, who in 2004 was found guilty of assaulting a conservationist and who cheered John Howard when he announced his ongoing support for old-growth logging, was forced out of the industry he had worked in for 30 years. Now, he told a local newspaper, contractors were at "rock bottom", unable to make ends meet. "The biggest problem in the industry," he said, "is Gunns' virtual monopoly", which meant that any contractors who criticised the company could be squeezed out of the business. "We came up [to the Launceston rally] and fought for John Gay's livelihood," continued Coad. "Well, now its time for him to turn around and do the same for us."

But no one - no Gunns director, no Labor or Liberal politician, no CFMEU representative, no 'forest community' advocates - was going to fight for the forest workers, or speak to their feeling of betrayal. Instead, like Kevin Rudd on his 'listening' tour in December 2006, they said that they supported the existing Tasmanian forestry industry - in order, as Rudd put it, that there be "no overall loss of jobs", ignoring the fact that supporting Gunns was exactly what ensured workers would continue to lose jobs, continue to be exploited under Gunns' pitiless tendering system, and continue to suffer.

There is in all this a constant theme: the Lennon government's and Gunns' real mates are not workers, but millionaires. Behind the smokescreen of statistics, beyond the down-home cant of 'timber folk' peddled by the woodchippers' propagandists, past the endless lies, is a simple, wretched truth: great areas of Australia's remnant wild lands are being reduced to a landscape of battlefields, in order to make a handful of very rich people even richer.

Yet giving away such an extraordinary public resource as Tasmania's forests now threatens the state's broader economic prospects. A growing weight of financial analysis suggests that the economics of plantations (with which native forests are being replaced) are not assured, but rather are a huge gamble for Tasmania. The industry's future prospects depend on global pulp prices rising; the government, as the *Australian Financial Review* put it, has "tied the state's economic future to the success of Gunns and its tree farms".

If the future looks dubious, the present is already a failure. The reality is that logging old-growth forests brings little wealth and few jobs to struggling, impoverished rural communities. While Gunns makes its profits primarily in Tasmania, the great majority of the company's shares are owned by mainland institutions. It has been estimated that less than 15% of Gunns' profits remain on the island, where the largest individual shareholder is John Gay himself.

As a consequence of the forestry debate, Tasmania is an increasingly oppressive place to live. Just six days after conservationists had gone public about arson threats in 2004, the historian Bruce Poulson, a prominent opponent of plans to log the historically significant site of Recherché Bay, had the study behind his Dover house, containing decades of research, burnt down in what police described as a "malicious" attack. Ray and Leanne Green had displayed Wilderness Society posters calling for an end to old growth clearfelling in the Styx Valley in their Something Wild Wildlife Sanctuary, half an hour's drive from the valley. They received numerous informal threats, and then had their business burnt out. Cameraman Brian Dimmick was bashed by a log-truck driver who objected to Dimmick filming his vehicle. So it goes in the clearfell state.

It has never been suggested, nor do I wish to imply, that Gunns is any way responsible for such acts. But the workings of power are not always reducible to orders or even intentions. When a society becomes entrapped in a growing coarsening of public rhetoric, evil finds succour. When vilification is commonplace, when lies are the currency of the day and followers seek to rise through the vigorous anticipation of leaders' unspoken desires, where all are disenfranchised and the most powerless feel what little security they have will be

destroyed by those who merely disagree, acts of dubious morality and even of violent criminality become justifiable and appear honourable.

Despite a few years of economic upturn between 2001 and 2006, Tasmania is once more technically in recession, and it remains the poorest Australian state, with the highest levels of unemployment and around 40% cent of its population dependent on government welfare. New key industries such as tourism and fine foods and wines trade as much on the island's pristine image as they do on the products they sell. There is growing concern in all these industries - in which job growth is concentrated - at the relentless damage being done to Tasmania's name by images of smouldering forest coupes.

It is little wonder that many Tasmanians now worry that the woodchippers' greed destroys not only their natural heritage, but distorts their parliament, deforms their polity and poisons their society. And perhaps it is for that reason that the battle for forests in Tasmania is as much about free speech and democracy - about a people's right to exercise some control over their destiny, about their desire to have a better, freer society - as it is about wild lands.

Of late, Gunns' fortunes have suffered. Its share price has dropped by over a quarter from its record highs of 2005, a reflection of having lost 20% of its market share to South American plantations. At the same time woodchip prices have dropped and a global woodchip glut beckons, all of which leaves Tasmania even more dependent on uneconomic woodchip production.

A recent rally in support of Gunns' pulp mill attracted just 50 people, including Paul Lennon. Gunns' own research shows only one in four Tasmanians supports the island's biggest company. Meanwhile, its pulp-mill proposal meets with growing fury throughout the state. The once-timorous Tasmanian media has begun showing courage in questioning the company's activities; the Gunns 20 writ has been rejected three times, and Gunns' projected legal costs - including the damages it must now pay - run into millions. On throwing it out a second time, Judge Bongiorno described the lengthy writ as legally "embarrassing". Still, Gunns persists with a fourth suit. The eminent QC Julian Burnside, one of the defence counsels, has said, "It leaves you wondering if the purpose is simply to terrorise."

Yet the hope for many Tasmanians of years past - that one or other of the major parties at a national level would act to end the madness of old-growth logging - vanished with Kevin Rudd's Labor Party green light to Gunns. No one could look to a political system now so hopelessly cowed by and enmeshed with the woodchipping lobby to effect change. After a decade of the most pro-corporation national government Australia has ever had, neither major political party has the courage or integrity to stand up to a rogue corporation.

And it is Gunns' determination to do whatever it must to continue old-growth logging that may just condemn both it and Tasmania to a savage vortex: given the history of dependence on government subsidies and the alacrity with which both major parties grant them, Gunns' ability to always shift losses onto others - the government, its workers - means that the company may well continue to prosper. But the price of maintaining the necessary political support is high and ever higher: it demands an ever more determined manipulation of public opinion, an ever more ruthless treatment of public opposition, and an ever more assiduous duchessing and policing of political parties.

For that reason, more Tasmanians are demanding a royal commission into the old-growth logging industry and its relationship with both major political parties. It may find nothing untoward has taken place. It may even find at heart something far more disturbing: that the boundary between what is illegal and what is unethical has now vanished in Australia, and that the spectre that now haunts the nation is not that of an omnipotent state but of a ruthless corporation, beholden to nothing but its own bottom line, inhibited by nobody, liberated by the failure of contemporary politics.

Nothing less than a major investigation with special powers can now clear away the stench that surrounds this industry and shames Australia. Without such an investigation nothing will change, except for the worse, and the rape of Tasmania will continue until one day, like so much else that was precious, its great forests will belong only to myth. Tasmanians will be condemned to endure the final humiliation: bearing dumb witness to the great lie that delivers wealth to a handful elsewhere, poverty to many of them, and death to their future as the last of these extraordinary places is sacrificed to the woodchippers' greed. Beautiful places, holy places, lost not only to them but to the world, forever. And in a world where it seems everything can be bought, all that will remain are ghosts briefly mocking memory: a ream of copying paper in a Japanese office and a man fern in an English garden. And then they too will be gone.

3. These following article highlight failures of the EPBC Act and the RFA system and the resulting biased political decisions that have nothing to do with protecting matters that must be protected for this generation and the next:

On 21 June 2014, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee's rejected the Coalition Government's request to delist Tasmania's new World Heritage forests so they could be logged. The decision sends a clear message to the Tasmanian state government, which wants to log other iconic forests, such as the Blue Tier, Tarkine, Bruny Island, Tasman, Reedy Marsh and the North-East Highlands.

"Tasmania's forests are some of the most spectacular on Earth, home to the tallest flowering trees on the planet, centuries-old trees almost 100 metres high, ancient rock art and endangered animal species including the internationally renowned Tasmanian Devil," said Australian Conservation Foundation campaigner Jess Abrahams.

What's happening with the Tasmanian Forest Agreement?

On 8th May 2014, the Tasmanian state government **tabled a new law** that seeks to undo the landmark ***Tasmanian Forests Agreement***. The Forestry (Rebuilding the Forestry Industry) Bill 201, if passed, will repeal the *Tasmanian Forests Agreement* under which approximately 500,000 hectares of forest became future reserve land.

Under the proposed Bill approximately 400,000 hectares of future reserves will be converted to future logging areas. While the forest cannot be logged for six years, some specialty timber logging may begin immediately. **Environment group signatories including ACF believe** the proposed Bill will only serve to increase uncertainty for the industry. The Tasmanian government must instead embrace the forest peace deal to secure a future for the industry and protect Tasmania's forests.

On 15th May 2014, the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications tabled its report on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

The committee heard from environment groups, scientists, government departments, and interested individuals about the outstanding universal values of the wilderness area and attempts by government to move the boundary to allow logging.

The Committee found that 'the government's proposal to remove 74,000 hectares from the extended Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is fundamentally flawed and will have an adverse impact on the values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area'. ACF's detailed joint submission to the Committee is available [here](#). On 16th May 2014 in Paris, the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Centre, the IUCN and ICOMOS will hand down their report and draft decision to the World Heritage Center on the Abbott government's proposed changes to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Environment Minister Greg Hunt and Prime Minister Tony Abbott are asking the UNESCO committee to delist tens of thousands of hectares of these old-growth forests — approved for the world's highest protection just last year.

This would enable logging in ancient and iconic forests like the Upper Florentine, Styx and Weld Valleys. The World Heritage Committee will make their final decision on the proposed delisting at the **38th Session of the Committee** in Doha, Qatar, between June 15 and 25 rejecting the proposal to delist the Tasmanian World Heritage Area.

4. The following are articles on actions which could benefit Tasmania and in fact Australia and the global community:

Tasmanian Forest Agreement

After decades of conflict, in 2012, the *Tasmanian Forests Agreement* was negotiated between environmental groups, timber industry, workers unions and timber community representatives. The Agreement provides protection for high conservation value forests and support for a new future for the state's wood product industries.

This protection for Tasmania's forests has been the result of three years of honest, difficult work between the environment movement, workers, industry, and timber communities to find a way through the conflict, together.

The result delivers major outcomes for the environment, industry and workers

Though we didn't achieve everything we had hoped for, and the Tasmanian Parliament added amendments that make the legislation weaker than we would like, after a difficult two weeks of further negotiations, ACF and our joint environmental signatories agreed it was better to proceed than walk away.

The commitment to the nomination of an extension of 170,000 hectares to the **Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area** was safe.

On 30 April 2013, the Tasmanian Parliament finally passed the Bill to legislate the *Tasmanian Forests Agreement*. It provides the mechanisms necessary to deliver formal legislative protection and management of the high-conservation-value native forests identified in the schedules of the legislation for current and future generations. It will provide the confidence for a Tasmanian forestry industry to have a sustainable and certain future and will support the greater Tasmanian economy by creating new opportunities to enable it to grow and diversify.

As a result of the TFA legislation passing the Tasmanian Parliament, on 2 May 2013 the Prime Minister and the Tasmanian Premier signed a new *Tasmanian Forests*

Intergovernmental Agreement. In addition to assuring the commitment this year to the nomination of the extensions to the TWWHA, it will put into place a conservation agreement under the Federal EPBC Act over the high conservation value forests identified in the Schedules of the TFA Legislation. It also directs the Commonwealth and the state parties to enter into expeditious negotiations to amend and extend, as required, the *Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement* to reflect the relevant forest industry and conservation outcomes by October 2014.

The outcome shows just what we can achieve by putting old differences aside and working together proactively to achieve economic and environmental sustainability. The signatories to the TFA will continue to build on the strengths of the TFA reforms through a joint commitment to **additional supportive measures**. The signatories have **commitments from both governments and their agencies** ensuring timely and effective actions are taken to assist with delivery of the Agreement's provisions. The TFA will see more than half a million hectares of native forests protected as reserves and more than \$100 million of federal government funding invested in the state's economy.

Read more about the **[Tasmania Forest Agreement here](#)**.

Protecting globally unique forests

In 2012, ACF became part of a historic agreement to end the decades of conflict that have surrounded Tasmania's forests. The agreement includes new reserves that will keep forests within the Styx, Weld and Upper Florentine valleys and the Weilangta and Tarkine regions safe from logging.

Here's a **[map of the new reserves](#)**.

These forests are full of towering old-growth Eucalypts and ancient rainforests of World Heritage significance. These magnificent forests have the world's highest recorded diversity of wet forest macro fungi and are home to nationally endangered and vulnerable species, like the Tasmanian devil, spotted-tail quoll, swift parrot and masked owl

The conservation values of the proposed reserves were assessed by an independent panel of scientists before the industry and union agreed to their protection.

A sustainable forestry industry future

The Agreement has the power to see more than \$100 million in federal funding invested in Tasmania's economy. This is on top of more than \$100 million of government funding that has already been provided through the agreement process, bringing the total to more than \$200 million.

The funding is to support the forestry industry's transition to a sustainable future, including a focus on plantation timber, and to diversify the state's economy, creating new employment opportunities in industries, such as agriculture and tourism.

The new reserves will act as valuable assets for the state's nature-based tourism industry and have the potential to generate millions of dollars for the state's economy under the national price on carbon.

During the negotiation process, a panel of independent experts assessed the industry's wood supply requirements, the effects of continuing business as usual on jobs, and the economic value of the reserves as a carbon sink.

The agreement is a positive outcome for the environment, workers and the forestry industry, which could not have continued to survive by depleting native forests at an unsustainable rate and to an extent that was unacceptable to consumers

National Heritage listing in the Tarkine

It is not only Tasmania's World Heritage forests that are under threat. The beautiful Tarkine wilderness in the island's north-west remains unprotected and very much at risk. The Tarkine contains one of the world's most significant remaining tracts of temperate rainforest, huge sand dunes, sweeping beaches, rugged mountains, pristine rivers and extremely important sites of Indigenous heritage.

On 8 February 2013, Environment Minister Tony Burke announced National Heritage listing would apply to only a small part of the Tarkine, rejecting advice of the Australian Heritage Council and refusing to recognise the extraordinary natural values of the region.

The Australian Heritage Council had **recommended** 439,000 hectares of the Tarkine be placed on the National Heritage List and thereby given stronger environmental protection at a federal level, but Minister Burke has ignored the Council's recommendations and has instead set aside just 4 per cent for protection.

The rest of this sensitive and significant environmental area has been left open for mining companies to damage. With less than 5% of the Tarkine protected as a National Park, the area's extraordinary natural values remain under threat from mining, logging and poaching.

ACF was deeply disappointed by Minister Burke's announcement and is considering the way forward to protect the Tarkine. ACF is also a member of the **Tarkine National Coalition**.

Download the new **Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area** map.

See out Tasmanian forests **frequently asked questions** and answers.

Read summaries of the Independent Verification Group's findings:

- **Tasmanian forest agreement wood supply**
- **Tasmanian forest agreement jobs and the economy**
- **Tasmanian forest reducing carbon pollution**
- **The forests agreement and independent verification reports summary**

Read summaries of the Independent Verification Group's findings:

- **Protecting the Tasmanian devil**
- **Tasmanian forest agreement conservation assessment**
- **Tasmanian forest agreement threatened species**
- **Tasmanian forest conserving carnivores**

Carbon pollution and Tasmania's ancient forests

It has long been established that older forests generally contain more biomass, and therefore carbon, than younger forests of the same forest type.

This means that the emissions from logging in older forests are much greater than emissions released from equivalent areas of younger regrowth forests or plantations.

This is of particular relevance to the proposed reserves as they are dominated by old, high-biomass, and therefore carbon-rich forest areas.

Emissions reductions and carbon credits

The Independent Verification Group research suggests that the reduction of carbon pollution from establishing new forest reserves could create significant carbon credits in the form of ‘forest management credits’.

If the new reserves are created, these forest management credits are estimated to average 6.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents each year from 2013 to 2020. The credits would rise to 7.2 million tonnes from 2021 and 2030.

This represents between 7.4 and 8.7 per cent of the nation’s total emission reductions from 2013 to 2030 assuming a 5% reduction in emissions is achieved by 2020.

How economically significant are these credits?

Forest management credits would provide a significant income to Tasmania and would depend on the carbon price. Between 2013 and 2020, the income would be \$650 million on a low carbon price path, \$973 million on a ‘Clean Energy Future’ price path, or \$1.7 billion on a high carbon price path.

This is a relatively cheap and easy option for reducing pollution and a potentially massive national contribution from Tasmania, especially given the size of the state.

To put these annual figures into perspective, they are more than the total annual emissions from a large 1.5 gigawatt coal-fired power station.

1 Factoring in a 15% ‘leakage’ factor.

2 These figures are based on Australia’s proposed Forest Management reference level accounting framework. The verification report also looked at international frameworks.

3 Such as the Stanwell Power Station in Queensland

In summary...

- *Protecting Tasmanian forests is also a win for the climate, with up to 8 million tonnes of pollution reductions and significant income in carbon credits*
- *Income can be generated through a number of carbon finance mechanisms, including tradeable forest management credits*
- *Older forests generally store more carbon than younger forests of the same type, meaning that emissions from logging older forests releases more carbon pollution*

Creating new forest reserves will:

- *Potentially reduce over six million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions per year.*
- *Potentially generate between \$650 million and \$1.7 billion in carbon credits.*
- *Contribute 7.4 to 8.7% of Australia’s cumulative emission reduction targets from 2013-2030.*

The forests agreement and the independent verification reports.

IVG SUMMARY SHEET

The recent Independent Verification Group report confirmed that a 'business as usual' scenario for the forest industry is not a viable option. The report again highlights that the Tasmanian Forests Agreement is required to help industry adjust and move on during this time of change.

The verification group's report examined conservation values, social and economic impacts, assessed wood supply forecasts and examined the carbon pollution reductions from protecting the proposed native forests. It showed why the Tasmanian Forests Agreement is an opportunity to move on from years of conflict towards a more secure and sustainable future.

Report findings: conservation values

The Independent Verification Group report has confirmed that 563,383 hectares of the proposed forest reserve areas contain conservation values which are in most cases are of national and global significance. This included 232,286 hectares of old growth and ecologically mature forests.

Establishing these forest reserves will protect the habitats of many threatened, listed and priority species of plants and animals.

This includes birds such as the grey goshawk, forty spotted pardalote, swift parrot and masked owl. Importantly, the reserves will also provide important habitats for Tasmanian devil, spotted-tailed quoll and eastern quoll.

In summary...

The independent verification report found:

- *'Business as usual' logging cannot continue*
- *Wood supplies cannot sustainably cover existing contracts and forestry in Tasmania needs to be restructured*
- *Important conservation values have been found in 563,383 hectares of public native forests*
- *Protecting the proposed reserves will help threatened species including the Tasmanian Devil.*
- *Jobs will be created and lost during this time of change.*
- *Establishing new reserves will reduce carbon pollution and generate substantial income for Tasmania.*
- *The Forests Agreement is an opportunity for Tasmania to move on.*

Did you know that the Tasmanian devil, the spotted-tailed quoll and the eastern quoll make up the world's largest and most intact group of marsupial carnivores? The three species are under threat from disease, habitat loss, road kill and invasive species. More than half of the proposed reserves are considered high priority for protecting the three species. This means the Tasmanian Forests Agreement will help these species survive by protecting their habitat in permanent reserves.

Read the reports at <http://is.gd/ivgreports>

Understanding the Tasmanian Forests Agreement | April 2012

Invertebrates and other species to benefit include the blind velvet worm, Bornemissza stag beetle, giant freshwater crayfish, Scottsdale burrowing crayfish, Mt Arthur burrowing crayfish, and fish including the Clarence galaxias.

Report findings: wood supplies

On native forest wood supplies, the Independent Verification Group report's major finding was that it was unsustainable to supply the amount of wood volume from native forests under current contracts. This means that a 'business as usual' scenario cannot work and other solutions have to be found.

Report findings: social and economic impacts

The Independent Verification Group report showed forestry job losses would continue in a 'business as usual' and that moving away from native forest harvesting was the only sustainable option.

It found that 'business as usual' makes no sense economically or environmentally, with 344 jobs in the forest industry getting axed, even if no new forest reserves were established. This is due to the mismatch between supply contracts and available native forest wood supplies. An additional 204 jobs would be lost if the necessary restructure occurs to resize the forest industry and the proposed forest reserves are created.

The good news is that there is an opportunity for new jobs to be created during the transition of the forest industry into a plantation-based industry. The Australian Government has committed \$276 million towards implementing the Tasmanian Forests Agreement. This includes funds to support forestry workers as they find a new job or career, and \$120 million over 15 years towards economic diversification in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Forests Agreement will restructure the forest industry and support communities and local economies during this time of change.

Report findings: Reducing carbon pollution

The Independent Verification Group report has established that the proposed forest reserves will create an opportunity to significantly reduce carbon pollution.

Recent science has found that Tasmania has some of the world's most carbon dense forests. We also know that older forests generally contain more stored carbon than younger forests of the same type, meaning that when old forests are logged, large amounts of carbon pollution is released into the atmosphere. This carbon can be avoided by not logging the proposed forests reserves.

This is good news for both the climate and for Tasmania's economy. The report found that establishing the proposed forest reserves creates an opportunity to generate significant 'forest management' credits. If the forest reserves are established, it will

contribute around 8 per cent of Australia's cumulative emission reduction targets between 2013 and 2030 and provide ongoing revenue for the Tasmanian economy.

5. Politicians pushing a political agenda continually push a harmful, short sighted agenda which does not have any benefits for Tasmania:

Coalition moves to strip Tasmanian forests of world heritage listing

Unesco to consider federal proposal to delist 74,000 hectares despite opposition from state, environmentalists and loggers



Environmentalists believe the Coalition's push to remove part of the world heritage listing is a 'smokescreen' to reopen the state's old-growth forests to logging.

Helen Davidson
Friday 31 January 2014

The [Coalition](#) has followed through on one of its election commitments to seek a reversal of world heritage listing on part of the Tasmanian world heritage wilderness area, despite opposition from environmental advocates, logging groups and the state government. Tasmanian senator Richard Colbeck, who is parliamentary secretary to the minister for agriculture, announced on Friday that the government will deliver a proposal to the [Unesco](#)

world heritage committee asking for a “minor boundary modification” which includes the delisting of around 74,000 hectares.

Unesco will give its verdict on the proposal when the world heritage committee meets in June this year. If approved, it would wind back part of the listing of 170,000 hectares which were added to the existing world heritage forest area in early 2012 by then environment minister Tony Burke.

That decision was reached with the support of the timber industry and environmentalists amid a peace deal seeking to end decades of dispute over the forests in the state.

Colbeck said the listed area will still retain “high value tall forests and giant trees in the Weld-Snowy Range, Huon Picton, the Great Western Tiers and the Styx-Tyenna regions”.

"No one thinks [Tasmania](#) should plunder its natural resources in the pursuit of short-term gains," said Colbeck.

“The Coalition's forestry policy will create a truly sustainable forestry industry for Tasmania, providing dividends for the environment, the community and the industry.”

However the decision has been labelled a “smokescreen” to reopen old-growth forests to logging, despite loggers not wanting it.

“This [area] is over half of the new reserves agreed for protection under the groundbreaking Tasmanian forest agreement,” said Vica Bayley, Tasmania campaign manager for the Wilderness Society.

“Our environment minister is proposing to axe global recognition for these forests when no one in the industry wants this,” Bayley told Guardian Australia.

“This is a purely political stunt aimed at tearing up the goodwill and the good progress that’s been made between hostile adversaries in the forestry debate.”

In December Glenn Walker, national campaigner at the Wilderness Society, told Guardian Australia that [there were fewer than 100 hectares of plantation forest within the 170,000 hectare parcel](#), and the majority of it is old-growth forest.

Tasmanian Greens leader Nick McKim said the government’s decision is designed to “plunge Tasmania back into conflict at the expense of our forests and forest industry”.

“Opening up these magnificent forests for logging is like mining the great pyramids of Egypt for road gravel," said McKim.

“Just when Tasmania was beginning to move on from the tired old conflicts of the past, the extremist Liberals are trying to drag us back. If the Liberals want to destroy the forest industry and damage Australia’s reputation as a global citizen then they are going about it in the right way.”

Tasmania environment minister Brian Wightman said in December that just seeking to delist a world heritage area would “undoubtedly bring Australia into disrepute”.

"The Tasmanian forest agreement is paving the way for the establishment of a sustainable, long-term and successful forest industry," he said.

"But the federal and state Liberal parties are hell-bent on taking the industry backwards and removing any chance for Tasmania to market its products.”

Tony Abbott says too much Tasmanian forest 'locked up', forms new council to support timber industry

Wed 5 Mar 2014, 8:00pm

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has declared that too many of Australia's forests are "locked up" and vowed to set up a new advisory council to support the timber industry.

Speaking at a timber industry dinner in Canberra last night, Mr Abbott also recommitted to repealing part of Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area made under the forest peace deal.

His comments have prompted anger from conservationists and the Greens, who have labelled him the "dig it up, cut it down Prime Minister".

Under the Tasmanian peace deal, 170,000 hectares of forest was added to the World Heritage area.

The [Government has formally asked the World Heritage Committee to delist](#) 74,000 hectares - a position Mr Abbott reaffirmed last night.

"We don't support, as a Government and as a Coalition, further lock-ups of our forests. We just don't support it," Mr Abbott said.

"We have quite enough national parks. We have quite enough locked up forests already. In fact, in an important respect, we have too much locked up forest.

"Why should we lock up as some sort of World Heritage sanctuary country that has been logged, degraded or planted for timber?

"Getting that 74,000 hectares out of World Heritage Listing, it's still going to leave half of Tasmania protected forever, but that will be an important sign to you, to Tasmanians, to the world, that we support the timber industry."

Mr Abbott told the dinner that Tasmania's forest workers have a friend in Canberra.

"When I look out tonight at an audience of people who work with timber, who work in forests, I don't see people who are environmental vandals; I see people who are the ultimate conservationists," he said.

While appointments to the new Forestry Advisory Council are still being finalised, Institute of Foresters national director Rob De Fegely has been named as co-chair.

Greens condemn 'massive assault on the environment'

Greens leader Christine Milne says the Prime Minister's words send a clear message to the world "that Australia does not value its world heritage areas or its national parks".

"People are going to be pretty upset that Tony Abbott is mounting this massive assault on the environment," she said.

Any move to repeal the World Heritage classification on Tasmanian forests would ultimately prove destructive to the state's logging industry, she added.

"Tony Abbott has got it so wrong. The logging industry was on its knees in Tasmania because around the world nobody wants to buy timber products that come from old growth forest," she said.

"There's now a high level of recognition that we need to be protecting the last of our primary forests around the world."

Senator Milne said the recent peace deal with Tasmania's conservation movement had given loggers "some chance of a future in the plantations", but that Mr Abbott had threatened to "send Tasmania back to decades of conflict".

"What he'll actually do is destroy the forest industry, not to mention Tasmania's clean, green and clever brand which is our main asset and that comes from our World Heritage area," she said.

Warnings of return to conflict between environmentalists, industry

Tasmania's Deputy Premier, Bryan Green, says Mr Abbott's approach to the issue is a step backwards for the timber industry, and a return to the logging war between activists and timber workers.

He told ABC Local Radio the best way forward is through the treaty struck by environmentalists and the industry - the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement (TFA).

"We've taken massive steps forward in this industry as a result of the TFA, we're backing the TFA, we don't want to return to the trenches," he said.

"We want to continue to diversify the economy, we want to grow the forest industry based on the TFA as it's established."

The Wilderness Society's Vica Bayley says Mr Abbott's comments are an attack on the agreement's signatories.

"It's incredibly concerning because of the negative consequences this will have on Tasmania," he said.

"This will plunge Tasmania back into the heady conflicts of past year. This will have a massive negative impact on markets for Tasmanian timber products and put a black mark over Tasmania's brand as a clean green fantastic place."

6. Failure of the RFA to protect old growth forests and biodiversity therein

The island of [Tasmania](#), just off the south east coast of [Australia](#) has the largest amount of temperate old-growth rainforest reserves in Australia with approximately 1,239,000 hectares in total.^[35]

While the local Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) was originally designed to protect much of this natural wealth, many of the RFA old growth forests protected in [Tasmania](#) consist of trees of little use to the timber industry.

RFA old growth and high conservation value forests that contain species highly desirable to the forestry industry have been poorly reserved.

Only 22% of Tasmania's original tall-eucalypt forests managed by have been reserved.

Ten thousand hectares of tall-eucalypt RFA old growth forest have been lost since 1996, predominantly as a result of industrial logging operations.

In 2006, approximately 61,000 hectares of tall-eucalypt RFA old growth forests remained unprotected. Recent logging attempts in the [Upper Florentine Valley](#) have sparked a series of protests and media attention over the arrests that have taken

place in this area. Additionally, [Gunns Limited](#), the primary forestry contractor in [Tasmania](#) had been under recent criticism by political and environmental groups over its practice of [woodchipping](#) timber harvested from old growth forests.

7. Harmful actions by forestry such as use of herbicides which leak and seep into our water systems with disastrous long term effects that government ignores or hides:

Proposed herbicide use in spring 2015

DATE 17/04/2015



Forestry Tasmania uses herbicides during plantation establishment where it is essential to manage weeds and to promote optimal growth.

8. Another article on an effort to ensure environmental protection now and into the future:

The **National Reserve System** is underpinned by a scientific framework to ensure that Australia progressively extends protection to examples of all our ecosystems. The scientific framework has a clear objective: to develop a **'comprehensive, adequate and representative'** system of protected areas - **commonly referred to as the 'CAR' reserve system.**

Specifically CAR means:

- 1 Comprehensive: the inclusion in the National Reserve System of examples of regional-scale ecosystems in each bioregion
- 2 Adequate: the inclusion of sufficient levels of each ecosystem within the protected area network to provide ecological viability and to maintain the integrity of populations, species and communities
- 3 Representative: the inclusion of areas at a finer scale, to encompass the variability of habitat within ecosystems

The goal of a CAR system of reserves for Australia was endorsed by all Australian governments as signatories to the [National Strategy for Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity](#) (2010), and the [National Forest Policy statement](#) ([link is external](#))

(1992).

Case studies in Tasmania on the National Reserve System



Skullbone Plains

Skullbone Plains is a spectacular 1,647 hectare property with towering old growth forests, near pristine wetlands and rare moss beds in the heart of Tasmania's central highlands, adjoining the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

[Read more about Skullbone Plains](#)



Egg Islands

The Egg Islands Reserve is testament to a great conservation partnership - 125 hectares of outstanding native habitat protected forever through contributions from families, business donors and \$200,000 from the Australian Government.

[Read about the addition of Egg Islands to the National Reserve System](#)



Vale of Belvoir

Nestled close to the jagged peaks of Tasmania's Cradle Mountain is a valley of global conservation significance - the Vale of Belvoir.

[Read about Vale of Belvoir](#)



Kings Run

Kings Run, on Tasmania's windswept North-West coast, had been used by the King family to run beef cattle - until they discovered the property was on the migratory route of the endangered orange-bellied parrot.

They signed a voluntary conservation covenant with the Tasmanian Government to ensure the habitat is retained, and have recently branched into wildlife tours.

[Read about the transformation of Kings Run](#)



Protected areas in private land

In November 2006, the Byrnes - Hobart farmers from Barilla Bay - became the 100th Tasmanians to sign a voluntary covenant to conserve plants and animals on their land for future generations.

The Byrnes are part of Tasmania's Protected Areas on Private Land Programme, a unique partnership between the Australian and Tasmanian governments, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. Since 1997, the Australian Government has provided nearly \$2 million to its Tasmanian partners, to help them establish and administer conservation covenants. The partners have invested significant time and resources into the programme to secure partnerships with valuable properties and property owners.

[Read about Protected Areas on Private Land](#)

9. Fights by the community to protect species which are listed under the EPBC Act and the political interference by altering laws to enable their destruction:



Following news that many rare and endangered Swift Parrots have arrived for the nesting season at Wielangta Forest in South East Tasmania, Forestry Tasmania's Bob Gordon declared a one year stay of logging.

The heart of the forest the Swift Parrots have returned to - coupe 19D at Wielangta - would have been destroyed last year if Mr Gordon's hand had not been stopped by Senator Brown's Federal Court action.

The Swift Parrot migrates to the mainland for winter and crosses Bass Strait, in just three hours, to nest in Tasmania each spring.

Senator Bob Brown personally funded a High Court case challenge to the EPBC Act, in order to highlight the threat to endangered species such as the Swift parrot, that logging poses.

While the court case was lost the threat continues.

Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett has the survival of these marvellous little parrots squarely on his shoulders. The Commonwealth has the power to immediately overturn the Regional Forest Agreement if the Tasmanian authorities proceed with logging at Wielangta, or in other Swift Parrot nesting forests in South East Tasmania.

For background on the Wielangta Court case see: <http://www.on-trial.info>

Wielangta and the forest wars

July 19, 2008

By [Susan Austin](#) & [Tim Douglas](#), Hobart

The chainsaws are poised to enter Wielangta Forest in south-east Tasmania, despite ongoing community opposition and a long legal battle led by Greens senator Bob Brown.

Eighty people attended a public meeting in Hobart on July 11 to hear about the struggle to preserve Wielangta Forest. The gathering was addressed by Bob Brown, legal team head Roland Brown and Margaret Blakers, a campaign co-ordinator and member of the Green Institute.

In 2003, Bob Brown decided to turn to the courts to stop Forestry Tasmania from logging the 10,000 hectare Wielangta Forest. In May 2005, he applied to the Federal Court for an injunction to stop logging, which was refused, but Forestry Tasmania agreed to stop most logging until after the court had made its ruling.

In December 2006 the Wielangta battle appeared to have been won when logging was stopped by the Federal Court, which found that Forestry Tasmania's Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) was damaging to the natural habitat of the swift parrot, the Wielangta stag beetle and the Tasmanian wedgetail eagle — all endangered species.

Environmentalists celebrated the court decision. However, instead of the logging industry changing their practices to meet the law, they managed to change the law to meet their practises!

Two months after the logging ban, then-PM John Howard and Tasmanian premier Paul Lennon (since resigned) simply changed the RFA, undermining the Federal Court finding by agreeing that Forestry Tasmania's management plan did in fact protect the endangered species.

In November 2007, the full bench of the Federal Court overturned the ban on logging. While agreeing that the species were at risk, the judges effectively ruled that the RFA alteration, which had no parliamentary approval, overrode the 2006 judgement and made logging exempt from the provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

Bob Brown owes around \$200,000 in court costs from the 2007 Federal Court proceedings. His application to appeal against the decision was voted down by two-to-one in the High Court on May 23 this year, effectively ruling out any further legal action to protect the forest.



The Wielangta case has confirmed that RFAs and also the federal EPBC Act are ineffectual for protecting wildlife. PM Kevin Rudd, federal environment minister Peter Garrett and Tasmanian Premier David Bartlett could simply change the RFA again in order to make it effective. However, so far they have all supported the planned logging.

Far from being demoralised, Wielangta's defenders are gearing up for the next stage of the campaign. Blakers told the meeting that the emphasis governments now place on climate change provides more campaigning opportunities.

Forest regrowth has been scientifically proven to be a very poor substitute for the carbon storage capacity of native forests. Carbon emissions from logging has been calculated to be something like 20%-30% of Australia's carbon emissions.

10. Scientific priorities for biodiversity conservation

Scientific data is used to develop priorities for biodiversity conservation for the National Reserve System:

- Bioregions and subregions where there is very little legal protection for plants and animals native to that area and where they are under a real threat
- Native habitats under-protected within the existing National Reserve System
- Rare or threatened species and habitats
- Places that offer refuge, centres of native species richness, or areas of national importance such as wetlands
- Special species, groups or circumstances - for example, very special habitat requirements, species with an exceptionally large range, migratory species, species vulnerable to climate change or other threatening process

Scientific data also underlies the establishment of priorities for selecting and managing protected areas:

- Properties in high priority bioregions, with intact and viable samples of native ecosystems and habitats
 - Properties that are managed as part of a larger network of protected areas, in bioregions where large areas of intact native ecosystems no longer exist but where the long-term viability of plants and animals native to that bioregion need wider protection.
 - Properties with ecosystems and habitats of national or state importance, with poor levels of protection in other bioregions.
-

Tasmanian Forests are not safe despite the federal Labor government attempting to protect them from the almost bankrupt GUNNS Timber and Forestry Tasmania. They relied for decades on government handouts from a Liberal Tasmania state government and desecrated this precious island

**A Forest a Day Wiped Out Deforestation thanks to Forestry Tasmania
Forestry Tasmania for years has been clear felling native forests under a Liberal Tasmania state government. Actually deliberately poisoning wildlife to establish plantations of species that don't belong and poisoning catchments in the process.
Forestry Tasmania: another state forest agency in league with corporations waiting for the Liberal National Party free for all if they win power this federal election.
This is what is at stake: these creatures will lose the last of their habitat and... die... not just as individuals but as species... extinct... to be lost from this earth forever**



Rare Tasmanian Golden Brush Tailed Possum
Precious wildlife loss due to Forestry Tasmania and decades of a Liberal Tasmania money above everything approach



Our quaintly ugly ‘cute’ Tasmanian Devil – though endangered by a terrible facial cancer disease, had its pristine habitat logged – and if federal environmental controls are taken away by a Liberal National Party – that habitat will be mined and logged again

10. The RET and the ridiculous idea that forests can be burnt for fuel so they can keep logging

The Tasmanian Forest Peace Deal was sabotaged by industry, supporters of a Liberal Tasmania, and Forestry Tasmania. \$2.8 million is available to Dorset ‘so-called’ Renewable Energies to ‘experiment’ with the biomassacre (burning) of forests.

But the Australian Labor government policy on the Renewable Energy Target says:
“Wood waste from native forests was removed from the RET as an eligible renewable energy source in 2011. This amendment was made to ensure that the RET did not provide an incentive for the burning of native forest wood waste for bio-energy, which could lead to unintended outcomes for biodiversity and the destruction of intact carbon stores.” (Climate Change Authority, March 2013)

The Liberal National Party want to change this to make wood from native forests eligible as a renewable energy source giving international investors the carbon trading certificates.

Biomassacre If the COALition win power this federal election and there is no federal environmental law left to stop this – God help Tasmania and the rest of Australia’s once beautiful forests

As well, Ta Ann, a forest destroying Malaysian based multinational logging company has been given \$7.5 million to help build a new plywood mill – despite a track record of rainforest destruction and human rights violations in the Malaysian state of Sarawak. They have received timber from the destruction of Tasmania’s world class forests, including timber from old growth forests, forests with recognised World Heritage values, threatened species habitat and other forests that are of high conservation value. It is now the major driver of logging operations that continue to destroy large areas of old growth and high conservation value forests in Tasmania.

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10 reasons why burning wood waste for electricity should not be included in the RET

By Josh Meadows on 15 May 2015

There has been some debate about whether the Abbott government’s last minute addition of burning wood waste to its conditions for a RET deal is [another Coalition Red Herring](#), or an issue of serious concern to Australia’s solar and wind energy sectors. According to the Australian Conservation Foundation, there are 10 good reasons why burning native forests for electricity should not be included in the RET. Here they are...

1. Including native forest burning in the RET will restrict the uptake of real renewables

Renewable energy targets can be more than met by wind, solar and other genuinely renewable energy sources. If burning the lungs of our land is allowed to be classified as renewable, it would take credits and assistance from the real renewable energy industry, especially from new, large-scale solar thermal and solar PV plants.

2. Logging and burning native forests releases a lot of CO2 pollution

The purpose of the Renewable Energy Target is to encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and create jobs in clean energy. Burning native forest biomass for electricity generation is contrary to this purpose as it depletes forest carbon stocks. Most estimates consider it to have a similar carbon intensity to burning coal. Protecting Australia’s native forests would reduce emissions by tens of millions of tonnes of carbon per year.

3. Native forests are more valuable left intact, sequestering huge stores of carbon

Australia's native forests contain around 13,067 million tonnes of carbon, close to 24 times our annual national emissions profile (535.9 Mt). Leaving these forests standing contributes much more to the effort to tackle climate change than chopping them down and burning them. The carbon they hold, if burned, will simply add to greenhouse emissions and undermine other renewable energy sources. The Climate Commission's 2011 report 'The Critical Decade' recognises the protection of native forests as a key climate change mitigation strategy.

4. Including biomass in the RET would drive deforestation

Eastern Australia was recently highlighted as a [global deforestation hotspot](#). Using native forest wood as fuel for biomass power is extremely inefficient. A lot of wood is needed to make a small amount of electricity. Biomass power plants need an ongoing source of wood for fuel. This would increase pressure on Australia's remaining native forests and become a major new driver for deforestation.

5. If biomass electricity is allowed in the RET, whole trees will be used to fuel the furnaces

The definition of 'waste' already used by the woodchip industry is any tree not suitable for saw-logging. Under the conditions proposed by the Federal Government, up to 49 per cent of all logs taken out of forests could be burnt!!!!!!!

6. Burning forests for energy will mean increased subsidies for an industry that is already heavily subsidised by taxpayers

The logging industry in every state is unsustainably propped up by millions of taxpayer dollars every year. There is no indication a native forest biomass industry would be able to stand on its own without government subsidies.

7. It would be dangerous to human health

Burning native forest wood releases toxins harmful to the health of nearby communities. Wood dust is a known carcinogen and exposure is associated with skin disease, increased asthma, chronic bronchitis and nasal problems. The available data, now established and documented, may leave federal and state governments open to legal challenges by individuals affected by sustained wood burning.

8. The conservation values of Australia's native forests are already under threat

Australian forests have been over-exploited for decades to meet unrealistic supply contracts. We face a wildlife extinction crisis in many regions of Australia. Loss of habitat from logging is a major cause. Throughout the country logging degrades vast tracts for native forest, reducing water quality and quantity in catchments and lessening rain-making capacity. The Australian Forest Products Association wants Australia to burn forest biomass, like Europe does, but most European forests are plantations, not natural forests. There are different climates, water supplies and industry economics.

9. It would have poor employment outcomes

The native forest biomass power industry would be a very small employer. Australia has the capacity to power the whole energy sector with renewables like solar and

wind. The Renewable Energy Target has already generated more than 24,000 jobs in clean renewable energy industries and is forecast to generate tens of thousands more.

10. Australians don't want it

A [May 2015 Reachtell poll](#) in the federal seats of Eden Monaro and Corangamite found most voters would be less likely to buy electricity from a company that produced it from burning forests.

Tasmanian MPs at odds over biomass inclusion in revised Renewable Energy Target

By [Stephen Smiley](#)

8 May 2015

The Tasmanian Opposition has swung behind the Federal Government's position on the inclusion of biomass in the revised Renewable Energy Target (RET), putting it at odds with its federal counterparts.

After months of wrangling, the [Federal Government and Opposition have found common ground on a revised RET](#).

One sticking point remaining is the inclusion of the burning of native wood waste as a renewable power source, which Federal Labor opposes.

Speaking in Carrick in northern Tasmania, Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said the debate around biomass was a distraction.

"This hasn't been the big issue - wood waste - in the discussions around renewable energy," Mr Shorten said.

"All I'd say to (Prime Minister) Tony Abbott is 'for goodness sakes, we're willing to be bipartisan, do a deal, and let's get on and have a look at the rest of the issues which need clearing up'."

Tasmanian Labor Leader Bryan Green was by his side during the press conference but later released a statement vowing to "lobby" his Labor colleagues in Canberra to back the Federal Government's plan to include native wood waste within the RET scheme.

Mr Green told the ABC there was scope to start a wood waste power generating industry in Tasmania, if it were included.

"We think there is an opportunity to look at how we can use the Renewable Energy Target to allow for sensible opportunities when it comes to small-scale biomass innovation," he said.

Mr Green suggested his federal colleagues had not understood the potential of the sector in solving the excess residues problem in Tasmania.

"I mean I think there is an opportunity missed here and I will be working hard to make sure that people understand that we're not talking about massive power stations being built in the southern forests or the north-west forests or the north-east forests," he said.

Disagreement a test: Tasmanian Government

The Tasmanian Government was quick to seize on the difference of opinion between state and federal Labor.

Resources Minister Paul Harriss said he shared Mr Green's position on the potential for biomass to emerge as a fuel source in Tasmania.

"We can find better use for the residues which arise from the sawmilling activities in this state, and we need to," Mr Harriss said.

"The rest of the world accepts such combustion as legitimate, green and environmentally-friendly energy."

Mr Harriss also claimed Mr Green had not convincingly made his case to Mr Shorten during his visit to Tasmania this week.

"This will show whether Bryan Green has any clout with his federal colleagues or not," Mr Harriss said.

From other news sites:

- [News.com.au: Deal on RET but not on wood waste](#)
 - [The Sydney Morning Herald: Labor and government agree on RET](#)
 - [Daily Mail: Renewable energy deal close but not quite](#)
 - [The Guardian: Australia's renewable energy deal hits last-minute snag over wood burning](#)
 - [The Weekly Times: Federal Government and Labor agree on renewable energy target](#)
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Briefing Note: Do we need to burn forests to save the environment

Richard Denniss, The Australia Institute

Background

The Renewable Energy Target (RET) requires electricity retailers to purchase a specified amount of renewable energy (the target) from certified generators of renewable energy. Certified renewable energy generators, such as wind and solar farms, are issued with Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) for every unit of renewable energy they supply (measured in megawatt hours - MWh). These RECs are then sold to electricity retailers who in turn hand them to the renewable energy regulator as proof that they are meeting their obligations under the RET.

The problem

At present burning woodchips or other native forest biomass, is not a certified form of renewable energy under the RET. Electricity generated from burning native forest biomass is not eligible for RECs.

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) is seeking to have the regulation amended to add biomass from native forests as a certified form of renewable energy.

Including native biomass burning in the RET will cause a number of direct and indirect problems including:

1) Every gigawatt hour (GWh) of electricity generated from biomass would displace a GWh of solar or wind energy. The Government already hopes to reduce the RET from 41,000 GWh to 33,000 GWh. Redefining the definition of renewable energy to include biomass would effectively reduce the amount of solar and wind required under the RET to between 28,000 and 30,000 GWh (see below for discussion of the scale of biomass generation)

2) Native forest logging and wood chipping in Australia is heavily subsidised by state and federal governments. As world prices for woodchips have fallen, the viability of native forest logging and wood chipping has declined even further. It is likely that including native forest biomass in the RET would provide an additional source of revenue to further prop up the environmentally harmful activities of native forest loggers and wood chippers.



What is the potential scale of biomass burning?

According to AFPA:

"It has been estimated that between 3000 (2020) to 5000 Gwh (2050) of renewable electricity (i.e. up to 7% of the RET) could be utilised from available wood-related wastes in Australia"

However, if the RET is reduced to 33,000 GWh according to AFPA biomass might account for around 15 per cent of the target.

The declining world price of wood chips and customer preferences that have shifted away from native forest products has had a significant impact on the level of forestry activity in

Australia. As a result, if a new market for forest products is created as part of the RET there is significant capacity for the forestry industry to expand to meet the new demand from biomass burners.

To put the degree of potential native biomass supply into perspective consider the following:

a) Every 1000 m³ of wood produces roughly 0.8 GWh (or every 1,000,000 m³ produces roughly 800 GWh).

b) In NSW, the Forestry Corporation of NSW could supply up to 700,000 m³ a year for bioenergy from across the state's three main native forest regions (Southern, Central and North East). This volume of biomass would provide around 560 GWh of electricity.

c) Production in Victoria is divided between two regions: Central Highlands and East Gippsland. Combined these regions could provide approximately 350,000-400,000 m³, enough to generate around 300 GWh of electricity per year. In the long-term,

Victorian production could be significantly higher. In the early 2000s, pulp log production in Victoria was around 1.3 million m³; it is now about 750,000 m³. If production was raised back to pre-GFC levels, it is conceivable that bioenergy generation in Victoria from native forests alone could exceed 500 GWh (and much higher if the Maryvale Mill stopped taking native logs and supply was diverted to bioenergy).

d) In Tasmania in the early 2000s, pulp log production averaged around 2.4 million m³ per year. It is now around 300,000 m³. Putting aside the questions of demand and the export of electricity from Tasmania, the potential for logs to be diverted to bioenergy from Tasmanian native forests is large. At the extreme, if we assumed pulp log production returned to 2000 levels electricity from biomass could be as high as 2,000 GWh.

e) In Western Australia between 100,000 to 200,000 m³ could be put into bioenergy, enough to produce around 120 GWh per year. The very high electricity prices in WA make the economics of biomass even more attractive in the west.

f) It is difficult to estimate potential native biomass capacity in Queensland. Historically it has been a small producer of native logs but with the SE Forest Agreement now defunct it is unclear what direction the industry might take in the future.

g) Adding (a)-(e) above suggest that around 3,000 GWh of biomass is possible, a figure which is entirely consistent with the industry estimate.

The cost of biomass

A 5 MW bioenergy generator costs between \$12 million and about \$25 million (capital costs only). A 5 MW plant generates about 30,000 to 40,000 MWh a year (30-40 GWh). On this basis, you would need in the order of 75 to 100 generators (each of 5 MW) to reach the 3,000 GWh. That is, the capital costs alone would exceed \$1 billion.

Is it economic?

Some have argued that biomass is not likely to be economic and, in turn, not likely to be either a threat to the current technologies that dominate the RET or a new source of subsidy to prop up the native forest logging industry. Such an argument ignores:

a) The evidence presented by AFPA.

b) That the reference for the AFPA claim is the Clean Energy Council (see p.6 of this link).

c) The Government's willingness to jeopardise its entire RET deal with the ALP to ensure that the definition of renewable energy is changed to include burning biomass from native forests.

d) The willingness of state and federal governments to provide large and ongoing subsidies to forestry industries. In particular it is important to note that the Tasmanian Government-owned electricity company, TasNetworks, recently provided \$30 million to the Tasmanian Government-owned Forestry Tasmania. Such a willingness to spend taxpayers money to support the forestry industry could easily transform into a willingness to fund the construction of biomass burners.

The solution

A simple solution to this problem is available. In negotiating a new RET the government and Opposition should simply agree to enshrine the definition of renewable energy in the legislation, rather than just in regulation. In doing so, continue the existing definition which excludes electricity from native forest biomass.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Peg Putt, CEO, Markets for Change for assistance with this briefing note. Any errors are the author's.

Native forest wood waste

The Terms of Reference for the Review require the Panel to consider the Government's election commitment to reinstate native forest wood waste as an eligible renewable energy source under the RET scheme.

Native forest wood waste was included as an eligible source of renewable energy when the MRET was established in 2001. Eligibility was conditional upon the wood waste being harvested under a Regional Forestry Agreement and complying with relevant government planning and approvals processes. Generators also needed to demonstrate that the wood waste was a genuine by-product of higher value logging activities. The use of native forest wood for the sole or primary purpose of generating renewable electricity has never been eligible to create certificates under the scheme.

Native forest wood waste was eligible for certificates under four of the five wood waste sub-categories, but only had to be specified as native forest wood waste when classified under the sub-category of 'biomass from native forest waste'. The other eligible sub-categories of native forest wood waste were: manufactured wood product; waste products from construction or furniture; and sawmill residue. Eligibility under these sub-categories did not require the source (non-native or native forest) to be specified.[1] Between 2001 and 2013, wood waste electricity generation (including native forest waste) created over 1.6 million certificates under the RET scheme.[2]

In November 2011, eligibility for native forest wood waste under the four eligible sub-categories of wood waste was removed from the RET. Transitional measures were introduced for the 22 power stations that listed wood waste as an eligible energy source and are effective until 2020. The transitional measures allow these power stations to create certificates under the superseded regulations for eligible electricity generation from wood waste (including native forest waste), below a contingent annual cap. Generation above the annual cap is considered under the current regulations; meaning it is only eligible if it comes from non-native wood waste sources.

The amount of LGCs created from wood waste is illustrated in Figure 41. Except for the years 2009 and 2010, the long-term trend in the number of LGCs from wood waste has remained relatively stable despite the removal of native forest wood waste in 2011. LGCs created from wood waste often trade at a discount compared to certificates created from other renewable energy sources. Fluctuations in the number of certificates created from wood



waste are more likely to be dependent on specific industry trends (like domestic and international demand for forestry products) as the wood waste is a by-product of higher value forestry activities.



<https://retreview.dpmc.gov.au/72-native-forest-wood-waste>

11. My Conclusion

As you can read from the articles and reports that I have included, Tasmania has real options in terms of uses for its old growth and native forests. Options that value add, options that benefit the world and the world climate and in fact benefit other areas, such as tourism and a healthy environment. This unlike what you find across Bass Strait you have Victoria which is the most cleared state and has the most species extinction in all Australia, as well as other states in mainland Australia that have logged the old growth and native forests destroying whole ecosystems and changing huge swathes of areas to farm land, to housing, etc etc.

Instead of logging Tasmania's precious forests, Tasmania must use them to store carbon, to protect ecosystems which are already fragile due to climate change, immediately revisit the Tasmanian Forest Agreement as well as put paid to the idea of burning our precious forests for fuel when it is clear there are other more beneficial uses for these special, rare and extraordinary forests where some of the old growth trees were there when Captain Cook landed in Australia.

It is also obvious that forestry keeping an eye on itself is like putting the fox in charge of the hen house! The Wielangta Case was lost but it highlighted changes politicians are prepared to make to the RFA, simply changing the RFA, undermining the Federal Court finding, by agreeing that Forestry Tasmania's management plan did in fact protect the endangered species.

It is clear that where there is a push by politicians, vested interests, and redundant, non profitable logging of old growth and native forests, politicians and governments are most prepared to alter laws to facilitate the destruction of these forests without regard to the needs



of species and the habitats which they require in order to survive. Certainly without any regard or rigorous adherence to inter and intra generational equity and in fact acting on the proven science of climate change.

Many species are becoming extinct under the human onslaught on this

Earth through habitat destruction and fragmentation nonnative species, pollution, overexploitation and disease, also preventing natural evolution. “Homo sapiens will have to cease acting as the cause of the Sixth Extinction-whether through our own demise, or, preferably, through determines action, before evolutionary/ecological recovery can begin.”

There are 7 primary destructive actions:

1. direct killing of species
2. loss and degradation of ecosystems
3. fragmentation of habitat
4. loss and disruption of natural processes
5. invasion by exotic species and diseases
6. poisoning of land, air, water, and wildlife
7. global climate change

I ask that logging cease in old growth and native forests because whereas previously they were thought to be limitless, the evidence is there that ‘logging degrades streams, alter downstreams flows, increases sediment loads, and reduces recruitment of woody debris and nutrients to fish-bearing recruitment of woody debris and nutrients to fish-bearing streams.’ ‘Clearcut logging dries out forest floors, harming amphibians.’ ‘As a result of more than a century of logging and fire control, some of Tasmania’s forests presently consist of a highly fragmented mosaic of clear-cuts, thinned stands, and young (and often single species) plantations interspersed with uncut natural stands... The road density often equals or exceeds the density of natural stream channels...

There is clear evidence of the ‘cumulative effects of old-growth logging, non-native species introduction, (with poisons sprays) overgrazing, predator control, and fire exclusion has been ecosystem simplification so that forest ecosystems are at risk of catastrophic losses of biological diversity.’ ‘Old growth forests have been greatly reduced by high grading and even management practices that targeted the most valuable old trees. eg huon pine, myrtle, etc.

‘Systematical removal of dead trees, as fire and forest health hazards, while extensive road networks for fuel means that the most managed forests now lack desired number of fallen timber, which serve as important ecological roles such as cavity nesting sites for many breeding birds and for many bats’ as well. ‘Today’s forests are characterised by unnaturally dense stands of young trees, a variety of forest health concerns, increasing potential for widespread insect population outbreaks (hence the poisons which filter into streams and bays like in the north of Tasmania causing all sort of human diseases)and unnatural crown fires.’

We cannot allow the destruction of old growth and native forests for unwanted, unviable, unprofitable woodchips which other countries are rejecting in favor of plantation timber only. We cannot allow the destruction of old-growth and native forests for unwanted, unviable unprofitable, unconscionable uses such as fuel when there are clearly more saner uses for our trees, especially in Tasmania, which has thankfully still some remaining forests!

The Tasmanian RFA is simply not doing its job in protecting threatened and endangered species and habitats. Instead it is clear that politically motivated laws spring up which encourages (calling them cutting red or green tape) the destruction of these and the loss of species. For goodness sake, when a government can’t even protect its native Tasmanian devil (newly declared State symbol) from logging trucks, cars, mining trucks there is something rotten in the state of Denmark! It is not just about the logging of old growth forests and native forests, it is about the destructive veins logging roads, the logging trucks that ply them at terrible speeds (having met them on the roads myself!) with no regard for anything other than ditching their logs and rushing to get the next load.

Just heard on the TV that the Tasmanian Forests have had their debt level increased. This is using tax payers money to subsidise a non profitable industry which cannot stand on its own



feet. This is wrong and totally unacceptable and it is yet more evidence of political interference in a failing business that will in all probability not get its certification anyway. Propping up the forestry industry makes no sense at all unless you reinstate the RFA immediately giving it certainty.

Thank you for considering my submission

Maria I E Riedl

Attachment

Harriss' Forestry stance shocks

- * Mercury (Hobart)
- * 11 June 2015
- * BLAIR RICHARDS

RESOURCES Minister Paul Harriss has angered his former Legislative Council colleagues by telling them Budget estimates hearings are not the time to scrutinise Forestry Tasmania.

Mr Harriss left MLCs gobsmacked during the Budget sessions, saying they would have to wait until December's government business enterprise hearings to discover detail on how Forestry Tasmania was travelling.

The business is being restructured under the Liberals' plan for the industry.

"This isn't the place to talk about Forestry Tasmania, its redundancy program, its repositioning on the back of a review . . . there is a lot of detail that is still on the go and none of that will be confirmed until the annual report time of Forestry Tasmania," he said.

Windermere MLC Ivan Dean said the session would be a waste of time if MLCs could not have questions answered.

"What is estimates about? This is the first time I've ever heard that we're not allowed to ask questions," Mr Dean said.

Rosevears MLC Kerry Finch said: "I can't believe what I'm hearing. This is a big development that everybody is interested in, taxpayers' money is involved here and you're asking us to hold on to our scrutiny until the end of the year?"

Despite the initial stand-off, forestry dominated the fourhour hearing with Mr Harriss revealing: FORESTRY Tasmania is still assessing the value of its plantation assets. THE State Government's sawmiller assistance program has led to 12 sawmills choosing to take half the value of their forest industry exit package to stay open, six at full capacity and six at limited capacity. Eight sawmillers chose to take a full exit package and close down. THERE is no firm timeline for the expressions of interest process for private operators to put forward solutions for the lack of a woodchip mill in the South.

Maria Riedl