

**INQUIRY INTO THE TRIABUNNA WOODCHIP MILL AND FUTURE
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TRIABUNNA REGION**

Attention

The Secretary,
Community Development Committee,
House of Assembly,
Parliament House,
Hobart, Tas 7000

Submission from Tom Tenniswood

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I present this submission as an individual who has lived at Little Swanport since 1977 and have been an active member of the community. The opinions I express are my own and I do not speak on behalf of any organisation in which I am involved.

Background:

- Farmer - sheep, wool, rare breeds and horses. Ceased active farming in 2008 but still own the property
- Partner Wind Song Bed and Breakfast
- Worked in the seafood industry 1991 to 1996
- Facilitator, Eastcoast Regional Development Organisation Inc. 1997 -98
- Supervisor / Landcare Coordinator – Glamorgan Spring Bay 1996, 1998 to 2003
- Member Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Environmental Panel 2000 -2005
- President, Eastcoast Regional Development Organisation Inc. (ERDO) , 2002 to present
- Secretary, Orford Triabunna Chamber of Commerce, 2013 -14

Terms of Reference:

(a) The circumstances surrounding the closure, sale and ultimate dismantling of the Triabunna woodchip mill;

The Triabunna region has had a history of 'ups and downs' and its community has always, picked itself up and moved on. Over the years we have seen:

- The Rostrevor orchards, once the largest orchard in the southern hemisphere and a very significant employer were sold in 1973 and the orchard pulled out.
- The fishing industry, closely linked to boat building, for many years were also a major source of employment. Several processing plants were built, some were taken over by larger companies and processing centralised at other locations whilst others became unviable and closed.
- The Alginate plant, established in 1964 at Louisville Point, harvested kelp to extract alginic acid for the food industry. Based on some poor research (the cut kelp did not recover as was predicted) this factory closed in 1974. Once again there were many people out of employment.
- In 1973 Tasmanian Pulp & Forest Holdings established its woodchip mill (the topic of this inquiry) and associated deep water port for the processing hardwood logs into woodchips for processing into paper. The chips, loaded into large bulk carriers, were destined for Japanese paper mills. Initially the 'Mill' was built with a life expectancy of 15 years and it was a very significant employer.
- The Woodchip mill, over the years, saw several changes of ownership and each time there was a downsizing of the workforce.
- In the year or so leading up to the sale by Gunns there had been a downturn in chip demand, particularly chips coming from 'uncertified' forests, which led to periods of non-production. At the time of the sale to Triabunna Investments the mill had been shut down for several months and many workers had left the town in search of other employment. It is also worth noting that the Mill had far exceeded its life expectancy.
- Under the 'Terms of Sale' Triabunna Investments agreed to make the facility available as a woodchip facility on condition that only wood sourced from forests covered by the TFA.

Historically there have been many other 'industries' in the Spring Bay region including *Eucalyptus* oil, wattle bark (for tanning), sand stone quarrying (very good quality), sawmilling, oyster shell lime and pastoral pursuits, all of which provided employment .

(b) Identify development and other opportunities for the Triabunna Community and the surrounding regions;

- As the industries listed above went from 'boom' to 'bust' our community demonstrated its resilience in coming to terms with change and could adapt and move on. After the closure

of the Mill there was a period of 'grieving', a time to think back to what has been and what has happened and gradually to move forward.

- There was very little in the way of help provided to our community unlike the 'task forces' we have seen for the people of Queenstown. There was one 'information' session in the Triabunna Hall which I attended where some service providers were in attendance to support those who had been made unemployed. I am not sure who organised this event but unfortunately it wasn't well attended and those present were disappointed.

Spring Bay Mill

- The announcement in late 2013 by Spring Bay Mill for their plans for the 'Mill' site was well received; the community were once again looking to a bright, vibrant future with this exciting development. In January 2014 as part of the Monafoma festival I attended a concert in "The Tin Shed" at the mill site. Tickets sold out within hours and I was pleased to see that there was a very strong attendance by local residents who spoke so enthusiastically about this performance and what the future held.
- The Glamorgan Spring Bay Council is very supportive of the Spring Bay Mill proposal and has unanimously passed 'Change of Use' and rezoning of the site. At the April Council meeting the consulting planner advised that approximately 95% of the required environmental remediation had been completed.
- On 6th March Graeme Wood was guest speaker at a very well attended Orford Triabunna Chamber of Commerce meeting where he outlined the proposal for Spring Bay Mill to turn the site into something world class - accommodation, food garden and culinary school/restaurant – "a magical place and a legacy for the future" – "a drawcard similar to MONA". He spoke of the developing partnerships with the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens in designing and landscaping the site and the creation of an 'Innovation Hub' – collaborating with others in industry with "clever Tasmanian solutions" to develop and market to the world. Graeme showed a chair which was made from plantation timber using new 'Australian' technology to bend the timber – opportunity to create furniture, architectural products etc. Graeme received tremendous support from the members present with one member saying that "this is the best thing that could happen for the East Coast"!
- Associated with the Spring Bay Mill a local landowner is developing a farm based, tourism experience and has already invested considerable funding to renovate a cottage for accommodation with more to come and the purchase of a large 4 wheel drive bus.

- As Spring Bay Mill develops there will be further opportunity for the Spring Bay Community Boat Shed, now auspiced by Eastcoast Regional Development Organisation Inc. (ERDO) and housed in the former 'Marinova' building at Rostrevor, to expand and showcase its diverse collection of small wooden boats to a wider audience. There may also be opportunities for 'sailing days' on the waters Spring Bay.
- The Spring Bay Mill proposal is diverse and will offer a wide range of experiences and opportunities to the visitor, students and employees. The current Government's desire to see increased visitation to the State, already at its highest number to date, will drive more visitors to the east coast and developments such as Spring Bay Mill will be required to meet this demand.
- The Spring Bay Mill proponent, Graeme Wood, is a very successful businessman who has a great understanding of the tourism industry, in particular the Asian market which Tasmania is currently 'wooing'. He has already demonstrated his desire to help our community to move forward by providing funds for "Triabunna Tomorrow" and a garden project at the Triabunna District School. His marketing knowledge and skills will ensure that this venture will succeed and the community of Triabunna and surrounds will be the beneficiaries of this success.
- I am of the firm belief that Spring Bay Mill will provide our region with an exciting tourism development based on the natural assets of the site, recognising the past history of the Mill, providing an educational and creative hub and an opportunity for the development of new emerging technologies. I am sure it will become a major employer in our region.

Triabunna Tomorrow Project

- This project, jointly funded by Spring Bay Mill and Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, is being undertaken by 5th Year Architecture students from Monash and UTAS. There have been 3 visits to Triabunna, the first was for a few days spent getting to know the town and its people and a workshop where they engaged with the community, generating ideas that could be turned into achievable projects. The second and third visits were to present their projects to the community. Their lecturers are Ross Brewin and Anna Glibey both of whom have worked with Mona and are now working with Spring Bay Mill.
- There was overwhelming support and participation by a large cross section of our community who welcomed these young and creative minds into our town. All were encouraged by some of the individual projects and many could see another side to our future – one of creativity.
- Many of the projects set out to generate the town's identity with art works, sculptures etc – most are simple and could be easily achieved with minimal funding.

Triabunna Marina

- The work undertaken to date by the Council has made a vast difference to the 'wharf' area and, I believe, there is quite a waiting list for berths. I believe there is a strong demand for marina berths from interstate boat owners who can fly in and be on their boat within an hour of Hobart Airport. The waters of the east coast particularly Maria Island and Freycinet Peninsula provide some wonderful cruising opportunities. This development provides opportunity for allied services such as chandlers, boat builders, slip facilities, providores etc. – there would also be opportunity for cafes, restaurants and associated businesses to expand or be opened.
- In the development of the Marina and the Spring Bay Boat Club's marina there has been little regard for berthing commercial fishing vessels, some of which are quite large, to load, unload and for maintenance - this does need to be addressed.

The Port Facility

- There have been a number of calls for this facility to be made available to 'exporters'. My understanding is that it is in poor repair and would require a large investment to restore this infrastructure. It is a bulk materials loading facility abutting a Crown Reserve. It has been suggested that a portable woodchipper could be set up to process chips, also a suggestion that bauxite mined in the Campbell Town area could be exported from this port - bulk materials would require large semi trailers, B-Doubles etc for transport. I would suggest that bulk materials should be shipped out of Bell Bay or Burnie and utilise the rail network for transport.
- With the Premier's drive to increase visitation to the State which from recent figures appears to be occurring, there would be an increased number of vehicles (cars, 'people movers' and buses) on our roads. I believe that our present road system (Tasman Highway and Lake Leake Road) would not support high levels of heavy transport and other traffic without compromising safety. I also believe that many visitors find large vehicles on narrow roads very intimidating – if we allowed this to occur we could actually reduce visitation.
- The provision of a port for passenger vessels maybe economically achievable – it has been suggested that a ferry service from Sydney could be possible as well as vessels ferrying passengers to Maria Island and Freycinet Peninsula. Smaller vessels would not require such deep water as bulk ships hence costs associated with reconstruction would be reduced.

Maria Island National Park

- Often cited as an underdeveloped resource! Maria Island Walk has put the Island on the map and a competitive ferry services have allowed visitation to increase in the past few

years. A working group with representation from East Coast Regional Tourism Organisation, Orford Triabunna Chamber of Commerce and Parks & Wildlife Service are working to implement some of the recommendations in the Maria Island Ecotourism Development Study (2013).

East Coast Network

- ERDO in partnership with Colony 47 convene this network of over 100 service providers, training bodies, community groups, and agencies that provide services to the East Coast. A facilitated meeting every 6 -8 weeks will see 30 – 40 people at The Village share their services, find what is missing and how to fill the gaps. It has been a very rewarding process and continues to grow.
- From this network group a health focussed network is being formed to look at the delivery of services, gaps, etc.

Stepping into the Future

- In April ERDO partnered with East Coast Network to stage a 'jobs forum', "Stepping into the Future", at The Village in Triabunna. More than 40 service providers, training organisations and employers were available to discuss options for future employment, retraining, courses, skills development etc. Our target audience were school students, unemployed and those seeking a career change. Eric Hutchinson MHR, Minister Rene Hidding and Tania Rattray MLC were in attendance for the full program.
- Planning has commenced for 2015 and there has been preliminary discussions with the Break O'Day Business Enterprise Centre about the possibility of having a 'forum' in St. Helens

Business Forum

- ERDO is partnering with Break O'Day Business Enterprise Centre to stage a one day Business forum at The Village in November with sessions on "China Ready", customer service, marketing and 'your team'. There will also be the opportunity to discuss insurance, accounting and sourcing funding. The Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies will also be giving a presentation.
- The following week a workshop, "Townpreneurship", with Dr. Colin Jones, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Enterprise at UTAS, will build on the work of the "Triabunna Tomorrow" project explore future opportunities.

The National Broadband Network

- Triabunna has been connected to the NBN for some time now but despite the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce and the Council who received 'NBN funding' to help educate and

raise awareness of the opportunities available with this technology. I believe there is a greater opportunity for businesses and training organisations which has not been tapped nor promoted.

(c) And matters related and incidental thereto;

- On May 8th with a number of Orford Triabunna Chamber of Commerce (OTCC) members I met with Senator Abetz to discuss “Triabunna’s future – how do businesses feel about Spring Bay Mill and issues arising from the sale of the Triabunna Mill” - Senator Abetz was accompanied by Journalist Jon van Tigelan who wrote the very infamous piece *“The destruction of the Triabunna mill and the fall of Tasmania's woodchip industry. How the end of Gunns cleared a new path for Tasmania”* in the July 2014 ‘The Monthly’. Everyone present at this meeting was very enthusiastic of the Spring Bay Mill proposal and felt it would bring huge benefit to our region.
- A week or so later members of the OTCC had the opportunity to meet with Minister Matt Groom to discuss the recently announced ‘Expressions of Interest’ for developments within National Parks. Towards the end of this meeting the Minister asked what we thought of the Spring Bay Mill proposal – again everyone expressed their overwhelming support of the proposal.
- In recent months there has been a number of ‘new’ people purchase properties and move into Triabunna. The Council’s General Manager recently made the comment that real estate sales were 27% up on the previous year. It is noticeable that there are an increasing number of “SOLD” stickers on real estate signs.