

THE SALE, CLOSURE AND DISMANTING OF THE TRIABUNNA MILL INQUIRY

SUBMISSION

25/08/2014

Firstly, I thank the committee for conducting this inquiry into the sale and dismantling of the Triabunna Woodchip Mill. The sale and closure have had far reaching effects for the Tasmanian economy, the Tasmanian people and the cultural heritage of our timber communities.

I note in submissions to date, several submissions by the Environmental Protection Authority. I would like to draw the committees attention particularly to an EPN issued on 20th Oct 2011 tabled as EPA3. Clause 3G is as follows:

G3 No changes without approval

- 1** The following changes, if they may cause or increase the emission of a pollutant which may cause material or serious environmental harm or environmental nuisance, must only take place in relation to the activity if such changes have been approved in writing by the EPA Board following its assessment of an application for a permit under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, or approved in writing by the Director:
 - 1.1** a change to a process used in the course of carrying out the activity; or
 - 1.2** the construction, installation, alteration or removal of any structure or equipment used in the course of carrying out the activity; or
 - 1.3** a change in the quantity or characteristics of materials used in the course of carrying out the activity.

It has come to my attention that Transport of machinery from the mill at Triabunna to Timberworld mill at Meander and to a private residence known to be the residence of Kim Booth MP at Legana, between early February and late April. It is my understanding that the transport company involved is known to the committee and will give evidence in this inquiry.

I note that EPA approval was given for the decommissioning and rehabilitation of the mill site at Triabunna by the EPA on February 2014. I would like to draw the attention of the committee, to closely scrutinize the type of machinery shipped between those dates and ask the committee to question the time it would take to dismantle and arrange transport to the buyer/s. Did the dismantling occur before approval?

I am aware of recent enquiries by Timberworld to dispose of oil that is contained in transformers, the type of transformers that would have been used at the Triabunna Woodchip Mill. It is

understood that toxic chemicals (namely PCB's) are often contained within the transformers that would have been used at Triabunna Woodchip Mill.

In the interests of insuring environmental protection, I ask that the committee ensure that the transformers did not contain PCB's and if they did,

- a) to consider the environmental risk of PCB's and that it investigates that all reasonable risk assessment and OH&S procedures were followed with the dismantling and transport of the transformers were followed correctly.
- b) Did the owners have knowledge of the presence of PCB's and did they notify the EPA?

It is my understanding that those who work in the media, have a lawful obligation to report truthfully and that publications that chose to print untruthful information can be held legally responsible. This given this, I am assuming that *The Monthly* article that was the catalyst for this Inquiry is correct in its publication. Further, that John Van Tigglen is a well seasoned journalist, would be well aware of all the legal ramifications of publishing material that is not correct. One could fairly assume that a review of Triabunna Investments financial records, would show evidence of works commissioned by outside sources such as Aurora Energy to turn off the power, which could be supported by Aurora Energy? There would also be evidence of works completed by electricians and tradesmen contracted in the destruction of equipment, otherwise the books would not balance? I am sure if the books did not balance, the ATO would be very interested? I am sure that the validity of *The Monthly* article could also be substantiated with the termination date of the caretaker that was said to be sacked prior to the dismantling.

I wish to state on record that the effect of closure, sale and destruction of the mill has been particularly hard for the community of Triabunna, but also for the families working in the timber industry across Tasmania, and for every Tasmanian. My own personal experience of losing \$80,000 in the value of real estate (home and block of land) in the 6-12 months following the sale of the mill is testimony. Our family's plans to build would have provided employment for builders, plumbers, plasterers, brick layers, concreters, tilers, carpet layers and electricians to name a few. I know of many who have, like us, had to give up on their dream of building. People were and are still holding onto their money whilst job stability is unsure, especially within the timber industry- but also in other areas. The flow on affect is on the building and trade industry. 3 years ago, I had a stable fulltime job in the building trade industry – but was made redundant as our retail trade branch (plumbing, closed due to the downturn in the industry post Triabunna. I then gained full time employment for almost 12 months in another retail trade store (flooring), only to be laid off again due to lack of work.

Whilst the economic and social effects are well documented, I wish to make special mention to the committee about the cultural heritage values that we are losing due to the collapse of our timber

industry. Forest harvesting predates European settlement in Tasmania! Whilst not formerly recognised, our cultural heritage is well documented in film, art, media and pen. Our small rural towns were built and thrived around timber harvesting. They are fast becoming ghost towns, if they haven't already and Triabunna is a sad example. The comradery, support, and security amongst those who live and work with timber are palpable. Our families and communities are being displaced. Our youth are moving interstate as they cannot obtain meaningful work. They are taking their children (born and unborn) with them. There are 5th generation timber workers still working in the industry who have never known any other life, nor do they want it! The knowledge, folk law and experience is passed on through generations. It is this that we identify to. It is this that gives Tasmania and its small hamlets its individual character and the very reason those tourists who the Greens would have you believe are our saving Grace, come to see. The wanton, deliberate and spiteful destruction of the mill is a blight on Tasmania's cultural heritage and should be fully investigated, as history will tell of how the Greens killed the life force of Tasmania!

Kind regards,

Kelly Wilton

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