

From:

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To:

The Legislative Council Select Committee looking into the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012

Through the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement Industry Development program, the government spent 68 million dollars that encouraged businesses to further develop their business; for many it showed the government had confidence in the industry.

Many people took up the offer, with the majority of the money going towards equipment that would be used in native forests. Included were businesses using the funds to further add to the down stream process, such as Ta Ann who received 10 million dollars. Further more there was almost 1 million dollars paid to assist companies who had been affected by the loss of logging areas reserved under the TCFA.

Many of the businesses who received the above grants have now received compensation through the IGA process. Some did not receive compensation and are now bankrupt or on the verge of bankruptcy.

The common question now is what is plan B? If this does not go through, what other options do we have. One needs to actually stop and think about the why and how we even got here. The story of how we got here seems to basically be that Gunns & the Wilderness society had a meeting to try and work out some sort of deal that would benefit both. Gunns would get the pulp mill, the Wilderness Society the forests. From that was born a process that whilst it seems to have taken so long to make a deal, it quickly destroyed the lives and communities of so many.

We are here not purely because of the high Australian dollar, or a market slump, but simply because some narrow minded people were trying to make deals for their own salvation. There is absolutely no logic what so ever in both state and federal governments throwing so much time and money into this because of a market slump and a high Australian dollar. There is more to this than meets the eye.

I have recently been asking people older than myself, and certainly more knowledge if there has ever been an industry that has had so much government interference. I asked what happens to the agricultural industry when sheep prices slump. When they go through draught? I was basically told the sheep would be shot and the farmer would go bankrupt or get on with farming. What happens in the mining sector when mining prices fall? I was told "they don't make as much money". No one I spoke to could tell me if there was any other industry that receives the government attention that the forestry industry does.

So why does the forestry industry?

Environmental lobby groups continually attack the industry. It seems to be an easy target for them. Why do they not put a 10<sup>th</sup> of their time in going after the mining industry? Whilst I would not agree with it or the tactics they use, I could understand some of their reasoning. Once you have dug it up it is gone forever. It doesn't grow back, it can't be replaced, and it does permanently change the landscape. However environmentalists do not attack the mining industry with the gusto that they do with forestry. In actual fact you barely hear a peep out of them in regards to mining in Tasmania.

Yet when it comes to forestry, they are at the forefront, constantly criticising, attacking and protesting. Yet they protest about a truly renewable resource. It does grow back. It can be replaced, and it does not permanently change the landscape. They seemingly win every time. History shows that each time we come to environmental-industry deal, they win with land lock ups and the industry suffers through loss of production forest. Bare in mind that they have nothing to lose in these discussions, any amount of land reserved is a win for them, and if they do not get all they want they just continue to protest to we find ourselves back at a table trying to make a deal with them.

This deal is supposed to bring peace to our forests. Ask yourself do you truly believe that it will? Do you believe that there will be no more protesting? Or if there is, do you believe that the likes of the Wilderness Society et al, will be able to convince protestors to stop? Do you trust that the Wilderness Society et al will actively go out and denounce protestors? Do you imagine for even a moment that they will stand by the industry?

Lets think for a moment what happened in the weeks leading up to the "deal". Two protests at Ta Ann, one in the north, one in the south a matter of days apart. Who came out and openly condemned the actions of those protestors? Not one single environmental group. Our Green politicians in fact showed contempt for the durability of the deal by likening the protestors to Ghandi and Mandela.

So please do ask yourself, what exactly does the durability mean? Will it be enforced? How will it be enforced? What happens if there is no durability? Who will stand by the industry and fight for it when protesting continues?

I ask these questions because I do not for one moment believe that this will bring peace to the forests. Nor do I have faith in environmental groups standing up for the industry when protesting continues. I also wonder what in the agreement will prevent us finding ourselves back in this deal making position in the future. Maybe you could tell me as so far I have not been able to find any one to tell me the answer.

This leads me to future security for the industry. How does moving production forest land in to reserved land secure the industry? In actually fact shrinking the available land for forest production means that the harvesting cycle would need to occur at a faster rotation for supply of contracts. However I am sure you will have received this information in greater detail from others, such as forestry scientists.

It would appear to me that the greatest thing to give industry security in to the future would be no further protesting, and the prevention of environmentalists being able to lobby for further lock ups. It is a really important point that needs to be considered. If this agreement is to pass this house, it needs to be the deal to end all deals. There needs to be strong and robust clauses that lock the remaining production forests as production forests in to perpetuity. There can be no avenue for any more production forests to be lock up under reserve at any time in the future. If there is, then we might as well just give it all to them now and save ourselves the pain. As it is the proposed amount of land to go into reserve leaves so little that it could be enough to kill the industry in the future anyway, by way of shorter rotation.

This morning I read in the newspaper that the government had tabled over 150 pages of amendments to the bill. My gosh, the hypocrisy in this is astounding. In December the government wanted this house to pass the bill as it was the best deal possible. Now 150 pages of amendments. I am presuming there are a number of government staffers who did not get a break over Christmas. My understanding from the newspaper is that these amendments strengthen the reserve system, and the immediate protection of forests. Terry Edwards is not happy, and Vica Bailey is not concerned. Seriously why would he be? These amendments further show the farce that this whole process has been.

What would the industry look like today;

If it wasn't for the high Au \$ and a market slump?

If the only issues were the high Au \$ and a market slump?

If Gunns had not moved out of native forests in a bid to receive a social license for the pulp mill?

If Gunns had not sold Triabunna to environmentalist Jan Cameron & Graeme Woods?

If Gunns had built its pulp mill?

If Gunns had never had the vision to build a pulp mill?

If illegal protesting was not considered a legitimate and just form of protesting?

If it were not for the GFC.

If the current government had actually stood up for the industry?

Without the IGA?

All of the above questions have played their part in where we find ourselves today. Pull any one of them out of the equation and we would find ourselves in a different set of circumstances with different results.

The forestry agreement has come about through the culmination of all of the above events. As much as the Premier would like us all to believe that it is because of the high \$, and that industry came to government wanting this, we all know that this is not the case.

My husband has worked in the forest industry for 25 years. He is what many consider to be industry, yet not once has anyone around the table represented him, his interests or his beliefs of the industry, what it is and what it could be.

We have not received compensation through out this process. We are in debt by over 1 million dollars. We did not get here because of bad business decisions. We got here through the above mentioned culmination of events that were out side of our control. We have financially survived through this whole process not because the business is still working as it is not, but due to the fact that while my husband was making money, he invested in property and assets that we have now luckily been able to sell. We have only just financially survived thus far, how ever it is probable that we will be bankrupt within the next 12 months as we are running out of things to sell. The property we do have on the market which would alleviate some of the debt, well who knows how long this will take to sell.

Recently my husbands ute broke down with the motor seizing. We were given 3 quotes for the repairs, new motor, second hand, and rebuild, they ranged from \$12,000 to \$19,000. I looked at my husband when he told me and I laughed. He asked me why I was laughing, I told him I have to laugh or I am going to cry. My husband needed a vehicle and we were able to swap the caravan my husband's brother had given him before he passed away for a 1985 Toyota ute.

We currently personally survive off money that I have saved over the last 2 years and Centrelink benefits. The savings wont last long as our household expenditure and 6 children means that we spend more than we receive in benefits.

I tell you these things not because I want sympathy but because I need you to understand that this process and the culmination of events has been the ruin of our life. It has consumed our lives, damaged our health, damaged our marriage and affected our children. We basically have nothing left but to try and figure out how we make it from one week to the next.

I believe the government had two choices;

1. To stay the hell out of it and let people either sink or swim.
2. To have pro actively done something to support the industry and its people

Yet what we ended up with is a government who only sometimes wanted to have an opinion. Who left the decision making up to people who represent the views of very few, and I mean that from both industry and environment. A process that paid compensation selectively, and I don't mind admitting that the compensation process pissed me off. I don't begrudge people who received compensation, yet I can not help but feel somewhat bitter that some people who received compensation have gone

bankrupt. Here we are nearly broke, yet I am proud to say that we have survived so far. Imagine how different our lives would be if we had received compensation.

We have been told that there may be money available to us if the bill is passed. Basically be quiet, accept the deal, you'll be eligible for some money and you will be able to get on with your life.

I can not, and will not accept that this bill is the best thing for Tasmania just so I can get on with my life.

I know that you are expecting people to give their opinion on clauses, what they can and can not live with. I quite simply can not live with more of Tasmania being locked away in reserve. When is enough, enough? Where will this end? I know many that would prefer to go continue to go head to head with environmentalist, than to see more of Tasmania locked away.

To me this is not simply about forestry. It is about the greater good of Tasmania. It is about making a stance to environmentalists, that we have had enough of their antics. The industry is not destroying the state.

Whilst I see and understand that you have to do "something" with this bill, I do so begrudgingly, as the only part of it I could accept would be the protection of workers and businesses against illegal protesting. I don't see that the agreement needs to be legislated; I see that this whole round table/IGA needs a Royal Commission.

This agreement if it passes this house will forever change Tasmania and set precedence in that every time a minority group dislikes an industry they too will be afforded the right to sit at a table and barter away the lives of Tasmanians.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Yours faithfully

Cindy Kelly