

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

The idea of locking up tracts of forest is a very courageous policy but one that leads to events that wiped out so much of Victoria and took so many lives when it goes wrong.

The idea of guaranteeing exact amounts of wood for industry that is grown subject to the whims of weather is a very complicated process that seldom is correct.

The idea of taking over good agricultural land to grow trees is expensive and controversial.

The forest HAS to be managed if it is to be preserved in the form and balance that exists at any point in time you wish to nominate eg .pre European settlement.

Any forest is a dynamic structure with a given life cycle and should be managed according to that cycle time frame in a way that mimics the natural events that would have occurred had there been no external/internal changes made to that forest's environment, eg. the exclusion of fire and the introduction of feral species, roads, towns etc.. A forest made up of trees having a 50 year life cycle should have a 50 year plan and a forest of trees having a 500 year life cycle should have a 500 year plan. The forest is maintained and industry has supply; a solution that should be popular with everyone.

This requires the mechanical removal of material that otherwise would have been consumed.

The simple and cheap solution to deal with this waste material is to sell it to industry who must be allowed to sell it in any form they can, eg chip, biofuel etc..

As the cycle progresses the waste material becomes more and more valuable, becoming saw logs from which anything from building material to specialty timber for furniture is the end product. About this time in the cycle the process should be turning profitable.

The cycle continues until eventually the end of the life of individual trees is approached, around the time that a specimen is rotting quicker than it is growing, then those remaining trees are removed. The forest is now becoming a net contributor of carbon to the atmosphere if allowed to remain and in most forests would have succumbed to even a low temperature fire that formed such a vital role in the make up of most of our forests.

The forest is allowed to regenerate and the cycle goes on. Simple!

Trees removed at this stage and used for the substantial industries, building, furniture etc. as opposed to pulp give the forest its maximum carbon storage capacity and wood recovered in this way from native forests as opposed to plantation forests with their many inputs and exclusion of the natural biodiversity make native forests the most sustainable and environmentally friendly product you can have and I challenge anyone to come up with something better. The popular species for consumption are not grown in plantations eg. Jarrah from WA, blackwood, the native pines from TAS etc. etc., and are available for ever from the native forest with full biodiversity.

Plantation wood for a specific market has its place but the hardwood component has little structural use without a huge wastage or recovery cost and when compared with a native forest the monoculture v the full biodiversity and the massive inputs v almost nil, the plantations come in a very poor second.

Plantations have a very long lead time, the native forest is so quick that it is here now.

Manage native forests without using the industry and it becomes expensive.

Fail to manage the forests and you not only risk losing or at very best changing the forest and its occupants but you put at risk all those that live near or in forested areas and the infrastructure that supports their life at a huge financial cost.

The industry like their guarantees but can survive on what's available due to weather cycles etc. just as any farmer has to.

It is one thing to be a rebel and make outrageous claims and get yourself reported on tv or in the papers or even to take on a large company and put it out of business but the decisions you will be taking may just be sentencing many people to a fiery death or at best reducing many to a life of poverty if you get it wrong.

Yes I may be one of them and I unashamedly beg of you to get it right.

Don Milligan