

**I offer the following as my participation in the EPBC Senate Inquiry.**

I am submitting this as a private citizen and on behalf of an incorporated group that has recently been founded.

I am the regional coordinator of My Environment Warburton (M.E.W) which is the regional branch of My Environment (also known as the Central Highlands Alliance). I am also a long time resident of Warburton and the Upper Yarra region.

This group was formed as a result of community concerns regarding logging in our Central Highlands water catchments.

As a resident of Warburton, this especially concerns many of us who live and work in this environ because of the recent logging in the Armstrong catchment and the proposed logging in the Cement Creek (East Warburton) area. The concerns are varied and I shall attempt to list them below with some added sections of recent relevant reports that I have at hand.

- 1) The logging in catchments contravenes the stated aim of the RFA's to protect threatened species.
- 2) Logging in Mountain Ash forests (especially) excessively robs the environment of carbon stores.
- 3) Clear-fell logging in catchments reduces the quantity and quality of water supply (including to Melbourne).
- 4) Logging in Central Highland catchments opposes the wishes of 15 councils (representing close to 2 million people) that have voted against such logging practices.
- 5) The passing through tourist towns of fully laden logging trucks negatively effects business and tourism.
- 6) The continual passing through regional towns of logging trucks, often beginning in the early hours of the morning, effects the mental and emotional health of the local population.
- 7) The tabling of a petition in State Parliament opposing logging in catchments.

1) When I first became involved in the opposition to the clear-fell logging (insidiously referred to as forest harvesting) I wasn't focused on the effect this was having on the flora and fauna, especially endangered species like the Leadbeater Possum.

Since then I have become aware of this as an important issue. According to Hannah Nichol's report, (Tammy Lobato MP intern)

The current rate of logging exceeds the time it takes for sufficient tree hollows to develop. As a result, there is a current critical shortage of nest sites, a shortage that will

continue for the next 100 to 300 years given current logging practices. According to Lindenmayer and Ough, as a result of clearfelling, "hollow-bearing trees and their dependent fauna are significantly reduced in abundance. An 80-year clearfelling rotation will render large areas of forest unsuitable for cavity dependent animals." This will directly impact the population of the Leadbeater's Possum.

A study, conducted by Brendan Mackey, Heather Keith, Sandra Berry and David Lindenmayer, reveals some remarkable facts about the capacity of Mountain Ash to store carbon. **The scientists have found that Mountain Ash have the capacity to**

## **store 10 times more carbon than other native forests in Australia.**

It was found in studying Australia's forests that the highest biomass carbon stocks are in the mountain ash forests of the Central Highlands of Victoria and in Tasmania. These forests store an average of more than 1200 tonnes biomass carbon, and a maximum of over 2000 tonnes of biomass carbon per hectare of forest. This is the forest that is currently reserved for Melbourne's water catchments and is still being logged to supply the woodchip industry (**85% of logged Mountain Ash forest goes to pulp**).

ANU scientists have calculated that the average amount of carbon stored in unlogged natural eucalypt forests is about 640 tonnes per hectare. According to the leading worldwide climate change scientific body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the average carbon stock in temperate forests is only 217 tonnes of carbon per hectare.

The research found that around 9.3 billion tonnes of carbon can be stored in the 14.5 million hectares of natural eucalypt forests in south-east Australia **if they are left undisturbed. The carbon currently stored in these forests is equivalent to "avoided emissions" of 460 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year for the next 100 years.**

This only reinforces the stance of **Yarra Ranges Council and the other 14 councils to oppose logging of Melbourne's water catchments**. Back in November 2007, I moved a motion to oppose logging which received **unanimous support from councillors**. At that time my argument was based on the threat to water supplies, which is still very real, but compound that with what has been revealed about carbon in native forests it is even more imperative that logging our forests stops now.

3) It makes no sense to create pipelines and desalination plants to help maintain Victoria's water supply into the future and then allow clearfell logging in water catchments. The summation within Hannah's Parliamentary internship report concludes,

The Kuczera curve illustrates a generalised relationship between logging and water yield. These results are relative to logging of old growth Mountain Ash forest. Where regenerated forest is logged, the Kuczera curve still detects a reduction in water yield, although it is not as significant as that of old growth forest.

- The forest in the Yarra tributaries is comprised of both regenerated and old growth forest.
- The Macaque model also suggests that logging reduces water yield. However, these results have greater relevance as they are derived incorporating catchment variation, such as topography, climate and vegetation. Hydrological studies have applied the Macaque model to assess water yield in the Thomson (where logging takes place) and the Maroondah catchments (where logging does not take place).
- The initial results of *The Wood and Water project* confirm the findings of previous research, in that logging causes a decrease in water yield. These results are significant as they are derived according to the specific catchment characteristics of the Yarra tributaries.
- Therefore, despite slight variations in the methodologies of hydrological studies, it is

possible to conclude that logging in the Yarra tributaries reduces water yield.

4) A growing number of local shires are joining Yarra Ranges Shire in opposing all logging in Victoria's water catchments.

Surely the senate inquiry should not ignore such an expanding ground-swell of opinion from local communities.

5 and 6) There is strong anecdotal evidence that the vast majority of residents of the Upper Yarra are opposed to logging in our catchments. During logging season fully laden logging trucks continuously roll through the picturesque tourist towns of Warburton, Marysville and Healesville. This is a blight on the aesthetic value of the area. It also poses a danger to people and animals.

7) In the time I have been involved in collecting petition signatures (over a 1,000 to date) I have encountered little opposition and much support. This petition is ongoing and is being tabled in State Parliament by our local member, Tammy Lobato MP.

The above is a small synopsis garnered to support my strong contention that there are no justifiable reasons to continue logging in water catchments.

Keith Sarah  
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