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Senate Inquiry.

Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision.

I wish to submit my submission on the basis that there are major impediments in the implementation of the 2020 strategy. This in part, is due to the lack of public consultation and community input into the initial construction of the strategy. This subsequently allowed the hijacking of the strategy by the forestry industry and companies set up to take advantage of the generous product rulings which harbor wealth taxation minimization. In Tasmania's case, we have planning, regulatory and arbitrary processes, which are heavily influenced by vested interests within the political and bureaucratic arenas.

Over the past three years or so I have raised many concerns over the uncontrolled expansion of plantations in the state of Tasmania from an economic, social and environmental perspective. As an owner of a forestry right over a small plantation of macrocarpa pines and having grown up with a sawmill and worked at a Pulp and Paper Mill for 12 years. One should therefore raise many questions as to why I have been so publicly outspoken about the 2020 Vision strategy and the affects thereof.

Terms of reference;

(a) whether there are impediments to the achievement of the aims of 'Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision' strategy;

In response to the above the answer is most definitely yes. The impediments are in the form of community backlash evidenced in Tasmania by the widespread public meetings, rallies and protests. People from all professions and walks of life are being forced to take public action, consider illegal activities and in some cases high level litigation are seen as the only options available to defend this indiscriminate uncontrolled development.

There have been copious amounts of media coverage over concerns being raised regarding plantation developments whether it be on cleared agricultural land or through the conversion of native and old growth forests. This coverage has been in the form of radio (talkback, programs and news.), T.V (News, Stateline, 7.30 Report, Landline and Current Affair.) and Newspapers (to numerous to detail). My issues of concern have been raised in all of the above.

Most recent media coverage have been Feature articles in the Financial Review and the latest edition of Readers Digest with a story to be aired on Current Affair on September the 30th.

The concerns being raised are over issues such as water contamination from chemicals such as Atrazine, Simazine, Glyphosate, Dominex and 1080 just to name a few, Property devaluations, decreased rate revenue and an increased infrastructure demand, increased vermin damage, weed infestation, shading, fire risk, reduced water availability, loss of services (i.e. school, church, shop, hall. {Domino Effect}) loss of community, loss of economy, etc etc.

The social dysfunction that has occurred in the areas that have been targeted for plantations is a disaster with some communities experiencing crime rates unheard of in the rural communities of Tasmania. One community that I know of had 14 cases reported to

Police in the first 8 months of 2000. I doubt if there was half that many in the preceding 50 years.

In the North West of Tasmania one has to remember that a large percentage of the plantation developments have occurred on good agricultural land and in some cases on prime agricultural land. The plantations have not been established as part of a whole farm plan by the farmer, it is being done by faceless, absentee corporations who buy the whole farm, remove as much capital infrastructure as possible then poison, plough, plant and disappear. The only plan that is implemented is one to dispel and discredit the dissenters.

At this point I wish to make a request that I be afforded a public presentation so as to be able to present material to substantiate and expand on the issues that I have and will raise in this submission. In the last three years I have become recognised as somewhat of an authority on the issues of plantation developments and as such I have been a key speaker at some 15 public forums statewide with the most recent on August 23. (conference resolutions and my speech hansard, to be provided).

In Tasmania we have already seen some 400 farms that have been converted to tree plantations. This equates to 10 % of Tasmanian farms that have been taken out of food production. We are only in the 5th year of a 20 year plan or to look at it another way we have to expect a doubling of what has already happened as we only have a bit over 1.5 million hectares of the anticipated 3 million hectares in the ground. This is more so the case as we had the Federal Forestry Minister Wilson Tuckey visit the State in August 2000 and said "Australia needed a Plantation State" and followed with "Let's have an environmental fight and if the people say they don't want investment money...then tough for Tasmania," Mr. Tuckey said. (Source: Tasmanian Country, Friday August 18th 2000, Front Page.)

The farming properties lost to date has had a disastrous effect on our beef industry with one of our main meat works slipping into liquidation last year and subsequently purchased by Victorian company Greenhams. They too, have experienced cattle shortages and have recently been bringing cattle in from the main land to keep their operations working. If the 10 % of farms were still producing the 10-12 000 head of fat cattle, which they were, this crisis would be different.

Tasmania's world renowned Honey Industry is also facing collapse as vast tracts of Leatherwood forests are being clearfelled and replaced with monocultured Eucalypt Plantations. Only last week we saw the Southern Tasmanian Beekeepers protesting on the front steps of Parliament House.

Water catchments are possibly one of the main areas of concern as there has been no independent scientific studies done in Tasmania to determine the long term effect on water availability from the conversion of cleared agricultural land and the conversion of Native and old growth forests to plantations. However there is mainland university data available, which suggests that there will be critical, changes to water flows given the massive plantation establishments to date.

It would be inappropriate of me not to mention the relationship between A.F.F.A and Private Forests Tasmania and the ignorance shown to the public of Tasmania in relation to the review of the 2020 Vision which occurred earlier this year. The one and only hearing was held in Launceston, with no notices in the Newspapers and the only way I found out was off the grapevine! It turn't out to be sour grapes, once again, as the A.F.F.A and P.F.T representatives present completely rejected the views and evidence that was put forward by the unwanted attendees. This is totally

inappropriate by Government Statutory departments. (Supporting documentation and resolutions of meeting to be provided.)

I also have direct anecdotal rumors that some plantation companies are claiming tax deductions from the A.T.O without completing all the necessary groundwork to satisfy the deduction criteria. There are also rumors around that contractors and management have colluded to alter completion dates and backdate bookwork to satisfy taxation rulings.

From a Tasmanian Perspective, and I can only speak from Tasmania's perspective, there is strong justification for a Royal Commission Inquiry into the Forestry Industry in this state.

Signed,

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