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Serving Northern Tasmania

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The Secretariat
Senate Rural & Regional Affairs & Transport References Committee
Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia
SG 62
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

'Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision'

SUBMISSION BASED ON THE TERMS OF REFERENCE:

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

We consider that the removal of impediments in Tasmania for the Plantations 2020 Vision has already resulted in:

- (i) social upheaval with the dismantling of whole rural communities;
- (ii) economic downturn (causing a lower rate base to be generated by local Councils and less income generated from the former farming communities); and
- (iii) environmental harm (causing loss of biodiversity on cleared native vegetation with a loss of water quality and loss water flows particularly in the dry period).

(b) whether there are elements of the strategy which should be altered in light of any impediments identified

No one strategy fits the whole of Australia for the Plantation 2020 Vision, and this is a fundamental flaw that requires immediate attention.

There should be a review of the strategy as it affects Tasmania. Coupled with this, there needs to be a reversal of the strategies including Federal taxation incentives. Without these actions, there will be a continuing lack in public confidence.

This review needs to be considered in order to gain community support that is expected

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with the joint Commonwealth/State to develop and implement natural resource management strategies for the three regions of Tasmania .

(c) whether there are further opportunities to maximise the benefits from plantations in respect of their potential to contribute environmental benefits, including whether there are opportunities to:

(c) (i) better integrate plantations into achieving salinity and water quality objectives and targets

Tasmania needs to have a plantations program directed towards utilisation of areas to address salinity and of poor water quality.

Plantations should not be established on land that already has native vegetation, particularly there should be no further clearance of ancient rainforests.

Moreover, plantations should not be established on prime agricultural land particularly in areas of good rainfall.

(c) (ii) optimise the environmental benefits of plantations in low rainfall areas

It is significant to note that in Tasmania plantations generally do not occur in the low rainfall areas of the midlands, East Coast and Flinders Island. The already cleared and degraded areas where low rainfall occurs in Tasmania should be used for the establishment of plantations. This would provide advantages for both the utilisation of the already cleared ground and to reduce salinity.

The effluent from Council sewage schemes should be utilised to provide nutrient for plantations, particularly in the dry land areas.

(c) (iii) address the provision of public good services (environmental benefits) at the cost of private plantation growers

The loss of prime agricultural land for plantations and the removal of native vegetation, including the clearfelling of ancient rainforests to make way for plantations is not only a crime against nature but a crime against the community.

Plantations are being established in the headwaters of town water catchment areas and by way of example the Launceston City Council has expressed its concern. Reference *The Examiner* newspaper reports 17th & 24th August 2002 as attached.

The loss of biodiversity through the clearance of native vegetation for plantations is of growing concern to the community.

The practice of clearfelling and burning of ancient rainforests on both private and public land is resulting in the loss of rainforest timber species for the specialist market now and in the future which is an appalling waste of resource that has taken many hundreds of years to mature.

(d) whether there is the need for government action to encourage longer rotation plantations, particularly in order to supply sawlogs

The over-harvesting of the *Pinus radiata* plantation resource in Tasmania needs urgent review and regulation. Of very serious concern to us is that large quantities of whole pine logs are now being exported overseas, rather than extending the rotation period in these established plantations so that local sawmill operators can have a sustainable supply of sawlogs. The plantation-based Auspine timber mill at Scottsdale in Tasmania's North-East, for example, has already warned of a shortage of sawlogs within three years, and its down-sizing or closure would result in significant loss of employment and economic distress in the North-East region. Refer to *The Examiner* newspaper reports 15th & 17th July 2002 as attached.

This wholesale overseas export of Tasmania's plantation pine resource should not be allowed to happen particularly in the Scottsdale community, which is facing the loss of 130 jobs with the impending closure of its Simplot potato processing plant, and which suffered additional job losses because of the closure of the Legerwood milk factory there two years ago.

(e) whether other action is desirable to maintain and expand a viable and sustainable plantation forest sector, including the expansion of processing industries to enhance the contribution to regional economic development.

Action needs to be taken to address the following:

- (i) the processing industry for pine is at risk, because the mature resource is being exported overseas as whole logs
- (ii) the supply of suitable specialist timbers for furniture, building and craft industries will be severely diminished as the present rate of clearance of native rainforest for plantations is unsustainable, and
- (iii) the destruction of flowering Leatherwood trees in Tasmania's native forests by the woodchip industry is threatening the livelihood of bee-keepers.

Conclusion


The rate of native vegetation clearance coupled with export woodchipping that is being driven for the sole purpose of plantation establishment has proved to be an

environmental, social and economic disaster and it is hoped that this inquiry can reverse the strategy for Tasmania.

We note that an advertisement was placed in *The Australian* newspaper on Wednesday, 28 August advising of the extension of the closing date for submissions to 30 September 2002 and that public hearings will be advertised in regional newspapers.

Would you please advise us of the date for public hearings in northern Tasmania.

Thank you.



Peter C. Sims OAM
Chairman