



Dear Senators

This submission is presented to underline the extreme concern that is felt by Doctors for Forests (Tasmania) regarding the adverse impact of the enactment of the 2020 vision. We are concerned about economic, social and environmental effects.

The Tasmanian branch of Doctors for Forests was launched in July 2001. We have over 700 members of whom over 200 are practising doctors. Our members hold a very broad spectrum of political views. Although we have been characterised as an "anti forestry" movement by certain groups, this is far from the truth. We strongly support a truly sustainable forestry industry which provides quality, long term employment. This forestry industry must be compatible with other important Tasmanian industries such as tourism, organic agriculture, leatherwood honey production, wine and beverage manufacture and aquaculture. It must also accord with the "clean, green, safe and clever" image that Tasmania tries to promote.

### **Economic and Social Concerns**

Between 1992 and August 2002, 2900 jobs were lost in timber industry manufacturing in Tasmania<sup>i</sup>. This suggests that the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) has done nothing to protect the jobs of timber workers in Tasmania.

The implementation of the 2020 plantation vision in Tasmania has led to broadacre clearfelling of native forests at unprecedented rates. Private companies harvesting state forests pay only minimal royalties. The state forests are mostly harvested for woodchips which are then exported for paper production<sup>ii</sup>. Doctors for Forests proposes selective harvesting of high quality timber with value-adding downstream production being performed in Tasmania, by Tasmanians.

Plantation development on prime agricultural land has resulted in serious loss of farm production and of jobs in rural communities and, with depopulation, loss of rates payable to local governments.<sup>iii</sup>

Another issue causing concern is the amount of log trucks on Tasmanian roads. Doctors for Forests' members recorded more than 70 log trucks passing down Hobart's main thoroughfare, Macquarie Street, within a 24 hour period. Apart from issues of traffic safety and road damage, there is justifiable anxiety about the image that such trucks present to visitors.

There is widespread anger and disillusionment in Tasmania regarding forestry issues<sup>iv</sup>. Many Tasmanians feel that they have been excluded from decision making processes and that their concerns have been dismissed by the federal government<sup>v</sup>.

Doctors for Forests would like to emphasise that we clearly appreciate the need for re-forestation but we feel that the methods being used in Tasmania are demonstrably inappropriate, damaging and profoundly detrimental to future generations.

## **Environmental concerns**

We cite three major areas of importance:

### *1. Carbon sinks and global environmental change.*

It is generally accepted that one of the driving forces for developing large plantations is the creation of “carbon sinks” to offset greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. Scientific evidence establishes that the clearing of native forests exposes soil and allows carbon dioxide to enter the atmosphere in quantities which may never be offset by the subsequent carbon storage in plantations.<sup>vi</sup>

### *2. Water quality and catchment areas.*

Compared to rainforest, rapidly growing young plantation trees use much higher volumes of water and have far less ability to retain moisture. There is widespread evidence that water volumes in our catchments are being dramatically depleted due to such broadacre plantations in upper catchment areas.<sup>vii</sup> Tax incentives associated with the 2020 vision are crucial in driving this practise. This is particularly concerning given the prolonged period of reduced rainfall which Tasmania is now experiencing.<sup>viii</sup>

Water quality as well as quantity is being compromised. Industrial plantation forestry is highly chemical dependent. We have specific concerns relating to:

- the use of 1080 poison for the control of browsing animals,
- the use of triazines as pre-emergent herbicides, and
- the aerial spraying of a variety of insecticides (including pyrethroids.)

1080 is a colourless, odourless, tasteless poison which was banned in the USA in the 1970s. Animals stricken by 1080 experience thirst and seek water. It is not uncommon to see decaying animal carcasses in water catchments. This readily leads to faecal contamination of the waterway. We feel that 1080 represents a very plausible threat to human health given the fact that its use is poorly controlled and monitored in Tasmania.

Triazine chemicals are known to be oestrogenic and can disrupt normal development of reproductive organs. Additionally, they are classified as probable carcinogens. Their use has been banned in several European countries.

It is alleged that in Tasmania there have been multiple, hitherto unprosecuted breaches of the Forest Practices Code. Many of these breaches relate to the management of riparian vegetation. The result is frequent inadequacy of the protective buffer zones around water courses - this allows chemicals to be washed into waterways<sup>ix</sup>. Future litigation from organic farmers and operators of aquaculture ventures is expected.

Of further concern is the fact that 1080 and pre-emergent herbicides are mostly applied by poorly informed, inexperienced rural workers who are often not provided with protective clothing.<sup>x</sup>

### *3. Fire risk of monoculture plantations.*

It is widely recognised that plantations of monoculture, same-age trees are highly fire-vulnerable. Recent examples of this fact include the pine-plantation fire near Canberra. Extreme care needs to be exercised in the siting of plantations, particularly if they are to be near to human population centres. Unfortunately, legislation in Tasmania virtually excludes local government input into plantation establishment. Doctors for Forests believes that current wood lot management is hopelessly inadequate in assessing and managing fire risk. Doctors for Forests fears that the gross lack of foresight regarding plantation forestry in Tasmania leaves human life and infrastructure hugely vulnerable to fire damage.

In conclusion, Doctors for Forests urges all senators to remember the value of making decisions that are in harmony with nature and with society. We request you to insist that the 2020 vision in Tasmania be the subject of a wide-ranging, independent judicial inquiry.

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<sup>i</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>ii</sup> Gunn's Annual Report 2001.

<sup>iii</sup> See submission by Prealena resident, Colleen Dibley.

<sup>iv</sup> In the government-sponsored Tasmania Together survey, 70% of Tasmanians expressed a wish for the end of clearfelling of old growth forests.

<sup>v</sup> In 2001, just prior to the last federal election, 4000 people rallied outside the ALP conference in an effort to draw the attention of Mr Kim Beasley to forestry issues.

<sup>vi</sup> Pearce, F., Tree Farms Won't Save Us After All, New Scientist, 26.10.02.

<sup>vii</sup> CSIRO

<sup>viii</sup> CSIRO

<sup>ix</sup> Current legal action by a Tasmanian local council against the forestry industry is underway.

<sup>x</sup> Macken, J. Gunns and Trees, Financial Review, 20.07.02.

This submission has been developed by the executive committee of Doctors for Forests & has been approved by all members of the executive. We all strongly believe that the proponents of the 2020 Vision have a clear duty of care to monitor & rectify the adverse impacts of the implementation of the process.