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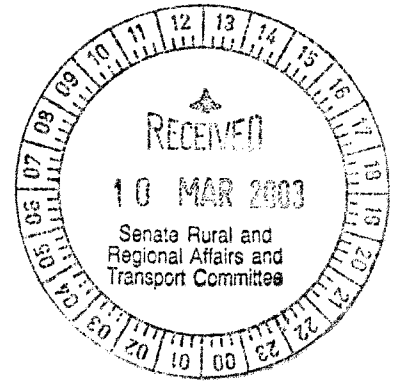
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Senate Enquiry

Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision

Yallowin
Hummula
H.S.W 2652
2nd March 200.

The Secretariat
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
Room SG 62 Parliament House
Canberra A.C.T. 2600.

To the Chairperson

re: 'Plantations for Australia: the 2020 Vision'

I am Elizabeth Wilkinson. I have been a resident of the Carabost area for thirty six years. My husband and I together with our son run a beef cattle and cropping property in this area.

I have via a media release just heard about your Senate enquiry. Unfortunately these reviews seldom seek information from those people whose livelihood are affected by decisions taken. Our community is very bitter on this subject.

I thank the Secretariat for agreeing to receive a late submission.
(via office of Susan Ley MP)

In the not too distant past the heavy handed attitude of State Forestry and private plantation managers who have told distrust land owners "This land will all go to pine plantations", have used this tactic to drop land values and discourage competition and investment in traditional rural agriculture.

After living in an area where the expansion of forestry has been encouraged we feel there is one law for us and one for plantations managers. Our property is well known regionally as highly productive but we are constantly made to feel that we are in the way of progress. Forestry appears to be the 'buzz'

word. In hindsight it would have been kinder to the community to resume the area.

Any large expansion of plantation timber must surely be examined to check the outcome on the environment and the people. Until some forestry practices are corrected these are the impediments to expansion.

1. The Environment

a) Water: In 1966 when we arrived in this area, the Carabost Creek was a clear fast moving mountain creek with black fish, trout platypus and water rats abounding. The small creeks flowing into it were the childrens playgrounds.

In the 1970's 1980's there was a rapid expansion by both State and private forestry. Four things happened

I In 1988 a massive amount of silt was washed down the Carabost Creek altering the line of the creek, damaging fencing pumps and creek crossings. The deeper holes were filled with silt. At the time the water was unfit for household use - the creek was - is - a major source of drinking water

II Carp spread rapidly along the creek. They flourished in the silt. "ative fish and trout diminished

III The headwaters of Carabost Ck. were planted to Radiata pines. The creek flow was entirely altered. becoming sluggish. When heavy rains fell run off from the myriad of roads being built caused the rising water in the creek to cut deeply into the banks which had previously been under water. The smaller creeks gradually disappeared under a canopy of blackberry which is an enormous user of water. They were not controlled.

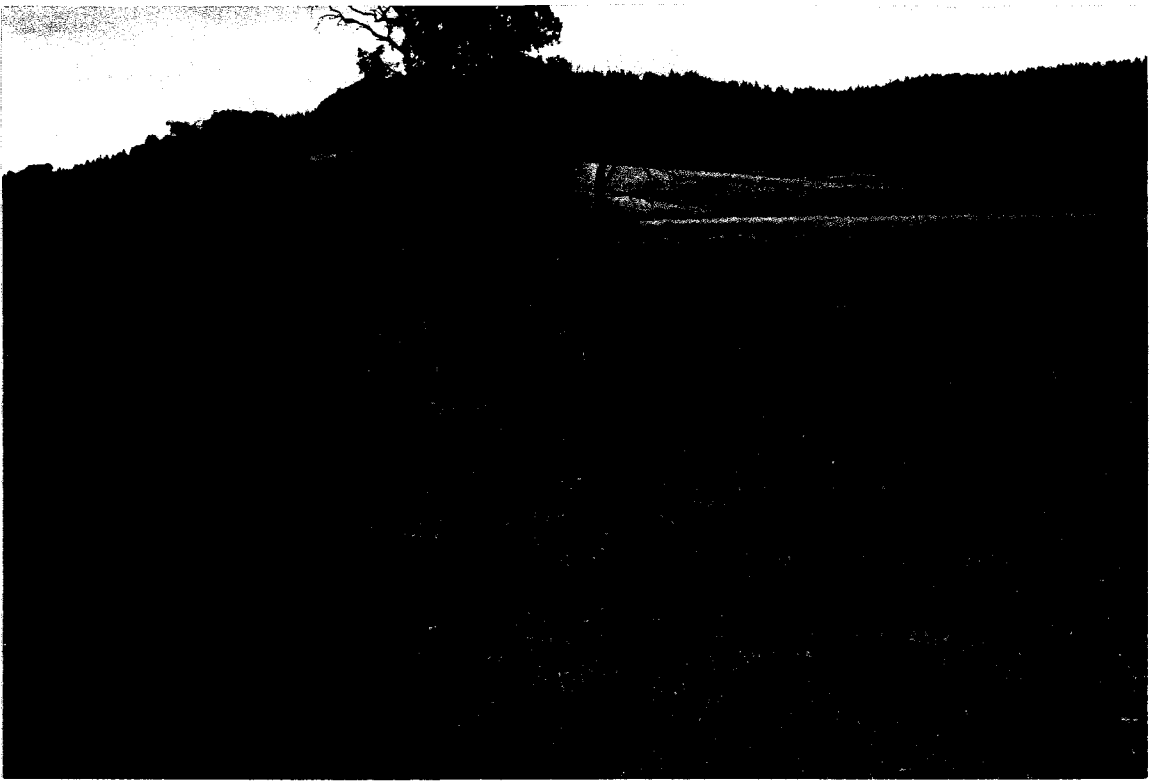
IV Those with irrigation licences found there was insufficient water to irrigate. This was a huge financial loss.

3 Inset



1. Erosion after clearing for forestry.
2. The silt that washed down the creek at a big cost to landholders along the Carabost Creek.

2.



This photo was taken on our property in December 2001. This property was completely free of blackberries until this paddock was rested from cropping and grazing. The tree, centre, has become the resting place for birds flying from the pine plantation in the background. Their droppings including blackberry seeds are responsible for the incredible germination of blackberry seedlings. This entire paddock had to be sprayed killing, valuable pasture. As the blackberries had only small root systems they did not all die. These plants have been resprayed as they grew larger with a better kill. A third spray will be done if the drought breaks this year. (They would not die in the present dry conditions) This has been a costly exercise and very frustrating. The lack of control of weeds in plantations is an unfair imposition. Would any other industry tolerate this?

The crop on the adjoining paddock is a high value crop of lupins

Footnote: I probably pull out approx 200 blackberry seedling from my garden each year - spread by birds.

In the 1990's contour mounding of land to establish pens began. It has resulted in almost nil run off from rain reaching the creek system. Dams on private property below the plantations were deprived of water and took much longer to fill.

b) Weeds - Blackberry, St Johns West and Pattersons Curse

Many of the properties taken over for forestry were free of these weeds when Landcare started, this area is named weeds as their greater property espence. With some encouragement the community responded and the results were spectacular on most farms UNTIL

1 Private Forestry stated 'Weeds dont worry us' They did not control their weeds and weeds began spreading back onto private land and roadsides and along creeks

2. State Forestry would only spray a narrow band adjoining farms and then only when complaints were registered

3. Hollbrook Shire Council did not inspect properties and minimum spraying was completed on roads.

Wagga City Council continued to enforce weed control and farmers had to control weeds

The results for the environment was horific. Weed free properties prior to being purchased for forestry became riddled with blackberry. Roads through private forestry were surrounded by vines and became fire hazards. St Johns West and Pattersons Curse flourished in unown areas and the seeds spread rapidly

4 The cost of weed control on farm increased by more than 100% as birds and foxes spread seeds over many miles

Some land owners just gave up spraying. or sold out.

L. Inset.

m "Citrus and
Traps"
Wilkinson



**Wrong place! Last seen alive in the writer's garden.
Carabost's new menace, feral pigs.**

re of the five pigs found in our garden. Pigs similar to this have been known
kill dogs on chains. Our grandchildren ¹⁸⁸ are the only youngsters in Carabost
fear one day they will stumble on these dangerous animals.

C. Feral Animals and Pest Animals.

With the rapid expansion of forest plantations the number and variety of pest animals exploded. In general it is the local land owner who bears all the cost of control measures.

1. Feral Pigs: First seen in the Caralost region in the 1940's when State Forestry expanded in West Caralost. They were shot out. From the 1980's pigs have quickly infested (or been put into) all new plantation areas. Not only do pigs kill lambs (up to 100% losses) they cause soil erosion and the destruction of pastures and crops i. e. cruel. Fencing is also destroyed and livestock boxed. This problem has been greatly escalated by the permission granted to pig doggers to dog the forests. Our animals are then terrorised by dogs abandoned in the forests. Women in their own gardens have been badly frightened by these huge dogs and their handlers. That pig dogging in pine forests is a cover for further activities is something everyone recognises including the local police.

2. Rabbits numbers have escalated because of the lack of control of blackberries - their main harbour.

3. Dogs: Dingoes: Dingoes have been sighted in Caralost. Pig dogs are a much greater problem. Bite marks have been seen on calves and grown cattle. As they come to houses they are greatly feared.

4. Foxes - numbers have doubled. Sheep producers are trying to protect their lambs with poison bait.

5. Goats - infested the area but have been shot out by farmers.

6. Kangaroos. Because of their numbers kangaroos have become a major pest animal. Pine forests are now grown on areas of previously improved pastures and the kangaroos breed there in the young plantations on unlimited feed (before grazing licences are approved for sheep or cattle) As the trees grow and the grass is shadowed and eventually dies out the kangaroos are forced onto nearby pastures and crops. Most locals have had them in their gardens. Shooting of these animals is allowed under permit however the roos must be tagged and left when they drop. Only a non farmer could conceive this idea. It is not hard to imagine the problems of rotten co-casals and modern machinery when harvesting - so not only do we suffer enormous damage to our crops but our machinery also.

The roos eat conserved hay, graze and foul pastures and drink from troughs. They can induce drought at any time. New fences can be ruined in two years. Kangaroos prefer to go through fences rather than jumping them.

Shooting roos has become a major cause of stress and social problems. It is something a farmer does not need to face after completing a ten hour day work.

Electric fencing helps but the fence has to go on the owners property and the kangaroos jump in from the forests & are then 'locked in'

Forestry owners take no responsibility. The Home Pastures Protection Board has trialed electric fences but recognises the fence is ineffective unless the forestry owner puts it on his side of the fence.

7 Wombats Always much loved these animals are now causing erosion & their burrows are an extreme danger to bikes and horses.

16) The Social Impact of Plantations.

Peoples lives are changed everytime expansion of plantations occurs especially in a closely settled area like Humula Carabosa

1. Income is lost through controlling weeds and pest animals
2. Time is wasted in doing jobs outside the usual farm tasks.
3. Absentee owners (private plantation owners) take no responsibility for district fire control, weeds or pest animals. They are reluctant to pay their share of fencing costs. They do not support district functions or establishments so the costs fall on the remaining citizens. It is harder to take holidays in the fire danger months.
4. This area has been encircled by pine trees. The fear of fire is a real and palpable emotion. In times of thunderstorms it is not unusual for residents to stay up most of the night monitoring fire strikes. We do not have the man power or equipment to fight major outbreaks. State Forestry workers have this year acknowledged there is not adequate water in this area to bomb fires.

5. Loss of District Identity "Where do you live"? "Carabosa"
"But Carabosa is just a forest!" It hurts

6. The Impact on Children Country life for children is something they treasure. Pigs, pig dogs and their handlers, rogue kangaroos, dingoes, speeding and carelessly loaded log trucks have made this district no place for complacency with children. They cannot ride bikes outside boundary fences and rambling or fishing in the bush is a no go zone.

7. Pressure on marriages Having neighbouring property

rown to plantation timber is not very pleasant. Some people refer to pine trees as the Black Death - reference to the fact that the country becomes featureless and women in particular feel isolated and alone. Men miss talking to their neighbours over the fence during working hours. The whole system of support fails, and with very limited social functions marriages are under undue stress. Young men have been leaving the district before marriage.

8 Farming for the Future - a promotion by government - what future? This district was carved up for closer settlement in 1949-51. It was a disaster because the farms were too small and the settlers in many cases unsuited to rural life. The next generation of farmers who brought in found a district floundering. Farms diversified and the introduction of triticale as a grain for dairy cattle and silage oats for horse feed and export to Japan suddenly gave the district new hope. People started to prosper until rising costs hit - costs not of producers making - costs as a spin off of forestry - costs forestry owners did not accept as their liability although they produced the problem.

Get bigger or get out was the catch phrase! As land came on the market the forestry giants cut gunned us. We were competing against an entity in State Forests case who didn't pay rates or stamp duty. Neither State Forestry or private foresters cared if fences were non-existent or weeds were uncontrolled. We had to factor in those costs and simply can't compete.

9. Recognising the District's Past I have recently published a book about the past and present Carabost. Settled in

1837 Caralost's past has almost been completely destroyed. Graves have not been saved in the plantations. No effort has been made to find these graves and descendants of past residents are angry and upset. When I asked State Forestry Archives to provide some details on the growth of forestry I was told I could pay \$50 an hour for research - that they were a commercial venture. I believe Caralost residents deserved better. When we put out fires on their land we dont get paid \$50 an hour!

Analysis

The residents of Caralost have watched prime pastures go under plantations. We have watched crystal clear creeks disappear under a canopy of blackberries. Platypus and trout have gone. The main creek has lost its deep holes. It is a sluggish creek that in dry time becomes smelly. We have seen fish kills as water and soil rushes off newly ploughed land for forests.

The fire season is a nightmare for all. Many areas are unaccessable because of weeds and the rubbish burden in forests is high. 'Feral' iple in the forests are unknown and unaccountable.

The government must think long and hard about the control of weeds, feral and pest animals before it promotes large areas of new plantations. Their cost will haunt this country in the future. Water (beside people) is Australia's most valuable commodity. Pine plantations are being established on the highest rainfall areas and no amount of publicity will convince people in these areas that they are not big users of the available water nor that

much of the land could be put to better use. Plantations rarely return any benefit to those who live nearby. The jobs go elsewhere. When creeks stop running it will be too late to say enough is enough on any catchment.

People whose lives are turned upside down by the rapid expansion of plantations are not consulted or counselled. We have been told that these councils cannot lay down development laws for pine plantations.

As the plantations push further into prime agricultural areas much could be done to protect neighbours if fences were built to hold feral and pest animals on the land they breed on. The control of weeds should be the same for forestry as it is for individuals. Weeds and pest animals are already spreading rapidly along waterways and roads into surrounding districts.

I have not dwelled on other irritations - dust from harvesting which blankets the district, pollen that turns everything yellow and fouls our tanks water and the loss of the beautiful country scenery. We are also hit with higher costs from trademen - they do not like travelling through plantations.

Our cries for help have fallen on deaf ears. That's progress - is an easy answer. It isn't progress it's turning a blind eye.

Thanking you
yours sincerely
Elizabeth Wilkinson