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28 SEP 2003

BY: \_\_\_\_\_

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Dear Senator Heffernan

As ratepayers and local landholders in the CORROWONG and TOMBONG NSW areas we have some grave concerns with the proposal of Willmott Forests LTD buying up grazing land and blanket planting with Pinus Radiata. I list below some of our major concerns and hope that you will be able to, in some way, aid us in our fight to limit the areas that can be planted.

### (1) WATER

This area is one of the major water catchments for the Snowy River and also the Lifeline for the families living within it.

There are currently TWO creeks which run through this area (Rossi and Currowong). The top end of Currowong is currently planted and does stop flowing except the section after Rossi joins it.

It is stated in reports from Professor Rob Vertessy (Cooperative Research Centre for Catchment Hydrology) and Mr Theo Hooy (Environment Australia) that in an area of 800mls of rain per year the annual runoff from agricultural land is 210mls per year but once it is planted to pine the annual runoff decreases by 220mls.

It is also shown that pines cause the underground water table to significantly drop. One of the areas to be planted contains the spring that makes Rossi Creek flow. Both these Creeks flow directly into the Snowy River thus the input into the Snowy would be greatly reduced.

**WHERE WILL THE WATER FOR THE SNOWY AND OUR OWN HOUSEHOLD AND STOCK USE COME FROM?????**

### (2) LACK OF CONSULTATION

It is shown in the reports from Hooy and Vertessy that this expansion is a result of the Government to have more plantations by 2020 which is TREBLE the current amount (report for RIRDC/LWA/FWPRDC, Joint Venture Agroforestry Program 20-21 July 2000 Melbourne.)

To this date no consultation has been undertaken with any of us in this community.

### (3) SOIL MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH

Landcare has currently spent around \$1,000,000-00 of Government money in this area providing fencing for Native Grasses and Soil Erosion. Once properties are purchased these fences are either pulled down by the Landholder and sold or Bulldozed by Willmotts.

As we all know the damage Kangaroos and Wombats can do to creeks what is to become of these already sensitive areas that one group was willing to protect but another does not seem to care about.

**WHY IS THIS, OUR TAXPAYERS, MONEY ALLOWED TO BE WASTED?????**

**(4) FIRE**

As is seen by the recent Canberra fires (and this writes personal experience) Pines are an extremely volatile commodity.

It is proposed that both sides of our road are to be planted and as it is the only access in or out what is to become of those that need to be evacuated in the event of a re-occurrence of the 2002-2003 fires.

This Company did have a DONATED FIRE TANKER but when a fire did reach their property the Tanker had a flat Tire and the Battery had been removed for use in some other of their vehicles and as a result the RFS was called out but because of locked gates had to cut their way in to extinguish the blaze.

**WHO IS GOING TO FIGHT THESE FIRES IN THE PINES????? See also point (6)**

**(5) RURAL PROTECTION BOARD**

As the RLPB relies on moneis paid by landholders for the amount of stock run to pay for a Ranger and a Vet and Wilmott don't pay this what is to become of our Ranger and Vet.  
**WILL THERE BE AN RLPB LEFT IN THIS AREA.**

**(6) DECREASED POPULATION**

Willmotts website states that they saved the "small country town of Delegate from dying.  
**UNTRUE!!!**

Willmott was based in Bombala and were looking for larger premises and as the community of Delegate had available the recently refurbished Old Hospital it was offered to them to rent, which they accepted. To date the outstanding rent stands at around \$46,000-00. UNPAID.

Also as they buy up land the people leave and as no new jobs are being created the local population is actually decreasing so for the businesses that rely on people, within the area, to remain solvent what is to become of them (eg: Bus Run-Mail Run-Wesfarmers-Stores-Hospital-Doctors-Service Stations etc)

We can see this "small country town of Delegate" actually dying with the help of our saviours Willmott.

**WHO WILL SAVE US THEN**

As a result of these families leaving the basis for the recruitment to the local volunteers will be drastically reduced.

**WHAT WILL BECOME OF THESE SERVICES.**

### (7) FERAL ANIMALS

We all know through experience that with pine plantations the feral animal population dramatically increases. With this increase the competition for grass becomes a major problem resulting with the landholders having to increase the hand feeding of stock or reduce the numbers of stock to compensate resulting in a dramatic reduction in their already low income.

The other problem is the destruction of fences allowing stock to escape. One example already exists where a landholders stock strayed through a broken fence. He was then approached by Willmott to remove his stock, which was done but when he approached them to contribute half towards the replacement of the fence he was told that because they carried no stock it was entirely his responsibility.

**DO THEY EXPECT THE LANDHOLDER, BECAUSE OF THE INCREASED DAMAGE, TO WEAR ALL REPAIR COSTS.**

### (8) PROTECTED FLORA AND FAUNA

This area is the home to the SPOTTED QUOLL(endangered and threatened list) and the DUNNART(soon to be listed).

Until this fight was taken up no studies were undertaken by Willmott in this area as they claim they did not know they were here. This once again takes us back to the **Lack of Consultation.**

Certain FLORA was found in an area that they planted and they were told not to plant certain areas. This was done but once the inspection was done they gave it a few months and then returned and PLANTED OVER THESE AREAS.

**DO THEY REALLY CARE FOR ANYTHING THAT IS NOT LISTED UNDER PINUS RADIATA?????**

### (9) AFFORDABILITY

Because of the extremely inflated prices Willmott pay for land it reduces the opportunity of the local landholder to expand his holdings without having to pay the ludicrous prices now expected.

Once pines are planted the land values actually decrease.

Recently it has come to this writers attention that because of the prices they are paying the Local Council is considering raising the land values and thus raising the rates because of the supposed land value increase.

**WHY SHOULD WE PAY FOR THEIR GREED?????**

We as a community ask TWO things,

- (1) Call for a MORATORIUM so that studies can be carried out as these people are just buying and planting Willy-Nilly.
- (2) When a community Meeting is called would either yourself or a suitable representative be able to attend

**Concerned Community Meeting  
Pine Industry / Traditional Rural Agriculture**

**AGENDA**

Date 2 September 03  
Time 9.30 am

Chairperson = Stephen Ingram

House Rules

- 1 Introduction – SI
- 2 What do we know?  
Reports GP  
Brett  
SI  
Round the table
- 3 Where to from here?
- 4 How? = Strategies

**Agriculture**  
**- Effects of the Pine Industry vs Traditional Agriculture**  
**Bombala LGA**

*Community Issues*

- **Process Issues**
  - Land Management – Lack of Planning
  - Lack of consultation – political push
- **Economic**
  - Viable, Sustainable agricultural industries
  - Affordability of future expansion by current or potential traditional rural industry families.
  - Sustainability of Pine Plantation industry in low rain fall areas
  - Then the value of the land will decrease
  - What are the options to pine for value adding – this has not been thoroughly investigated although commenced by the BLGA Planning Process. – Eg eco tourism. The balance between
  - This would actually decrease the income for any LGA
  - Unfair playing field – Federal Tax incentives 120%, different sets of rules for different players eg land clearing strategies
  - Insurance living next to a high risk industry
  - Future costs to the Bombala LGA by the pine industry = Eg road maintenance due to different type of usage - who will pay?
- **Bombala RLPB**
  - Feral animals – Within the pine plantations - no planning or management of, increase harbouring of eg dogs, pigs, deer, cats
  - Weed Control – Within the pine plantations - no planning or management of
  - Threatened Species – no assessments and therefore unknown effects on current threatened species
  - Animal Health – decreased ability to control outbreaks of animal diseases eg foot and mouth, hydatids
  - No animal health rate levied on the private plantation this will decrease the viability of the RLPB eg a veterinarian.
- **Natural Resources/ Environment**
  - Biodiversity Within the ecology of the system
  - Effect of the continuing changing climate – drier cycles
  - Soil Management and Health – the good work of the Land care groups, what does this mean for pine plantations? Where is the measurable data? What have been the effects of the Plantation in the Tumut Area??
  - Native animals – displacement of
  - Native Vegetation – Effects on the Grasslands, Snowy River Pines and other
  - Water quality – Whole of catchment impact, Water yield / Volume, reduction of water for domestic and traditional agricultural activities eg

Browns camp (Corrowong Creek) and domestic bores, Irrigation Licences

- Fire – Access, The current private company and their track record, including their policies and procedures in the last fires is questionable. evacuation of people with the nature of the roads in this area.
    - What will be the future of pine plantations around the ACT?
    - How will future funding be sourced?
  - Afraid of being a buffer zone between the NPWS and the Pine Plantations.
  - How much land is actually required to ensure a viable pine industry?
  - Where is this land going to be?
- Social
    - Wilmotts – Promised local support is now in question as they have not demonstrated to be good corporate citizens. Also their web site states they saved Delegate from dying – this is untrue. They were invited as we had the right type of facility for their purpose and this was due to a proactive community as demonstrated in the Delegate Action plan.
    - The displacement of local families is the basis of the volunteer system for nearly every aspect of the community thereby decreasing the fabric of the community.
    - Decrease Population – Other Government services and businesses need the people with appropriate skills to fill, positions eg administration, nurses and teachers = decreased capacity.
    - Traditional Farm Houses once full are now unoccupied and some are being taken down – check source.
    - Access to government and non government services will be decreased due to decreased population.
    - Security of employment – the use of casuals instead of permanents
    - Boom Bust Phenomena from previous experience in this area
    - Pressures placed on people to sign up.

The current plans DLWC backs up the issues identified by the community  
Other planning processes including the Monaro Regional Community Plan, Delegate Action Plan and other regional plans

## Proposed Plan

### Short Term

- Develop a community committee to follow the process under a responsible defined accountable structure
- Work with all levels in the community and all levels of Government = all Government approach
- Request a moratorium – from this date

### Medium Term


- Seek Funding for the Research Report and Planning Process
- Research Report - Identifying baseline data / information, reviewing the current situation identifying the effects of pine plantation now and in the future. Plain English Report – no jargon – recommendations for the future development of Agricultural industries in the Bombala LGA.
- Develop an Action Plan for appropriate agricultural development within the BLGA to ensure sustainable and viable communities and industries. Outlining a Strategic Direction for the BLGA

13 August 03  
Reviewed: 1 September 03

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Yours Sincerely

Glenn Perkins



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AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

SENATOR HEFFERNAN

HON CRAIG KNOWLES

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