

CHAIN REACTION

THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE OF FRIENDS OF THE EARTH AUSTRALIA :: WWW.FOE.ORG.AU
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FOREST FEATURE

THE MURRAY COUNTRY PROJECT

NEW ALLIANCE OF FOREST GROUPS

PESTICIDES AND TASMANIAN FORESTRY

GUNNS TARGETS TRIABUNNA 13

CSIRO EXPERT SLAMS GUNN'S PULP MILL

MELBOURNE COUNCILS OPPOSE CATCHMENT LOGGING

FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

THE FORGOTTEN FORESTS OF NSW

AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN THE ILLEGAL TIMBER TRADE

HISTORIC VICTORIAN RED GUM VICTORY

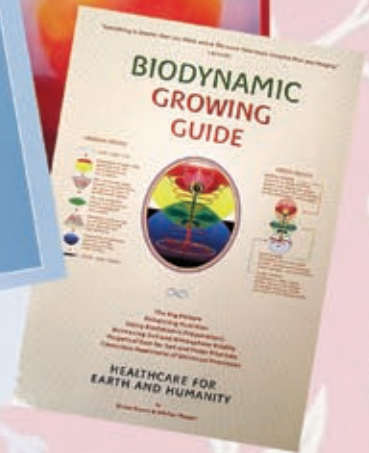


*Victorian Red Gum Forests
An Historic Victory!*

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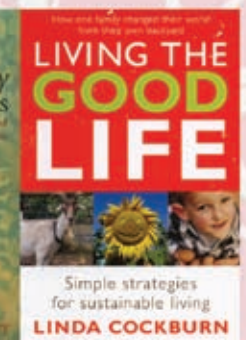
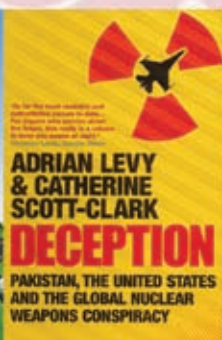


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Front cover:

Aerial view of Camp Florentine and Coupe FO044A.
Photo by Rob Blakers.

Uncle Colin Walker, Yorta Yorta Nation outside the Yenbena Indigenous Training Centre.

Photo: Soc Hedditch

Below: April 10-12, easter weekend, over 50 people gathered with Wiradjuri Traditional Owners to protest the largest gold miner in the world, Barrick Gold, who are operating on Wiradjuri land in Lake Cowal. In this photo Neville Chappy Williams, Traditional Owner (Mooka/Kalara United Families, Wiradjuri Nation) leads supporters in a smoking ceremony onto Barrick's mine operations. 28 protesters were arrested having breached security and made their way into the open cut pit of the mine.

More at: <www.savelakecowal.org>

Photo: Fiona Lee

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contents

regular items

Earth News	2
FoE Australia News	4
FoE International News	6
Letters to the Editor	47
FoE Australia Contacts	48

forest feature

Time for Fresh Thinking on Forests - Margaret Blakers	8
New Alliance of Forest Groups	10
Tasmania's Old Growth Forests - Ula Majewski	11
Pesticides and the Tasmanian Forestry Industry - Alison Bleaney	13
Gunns Targets Triabunna 13 - Jenny Weber	15
CSIRO Expert Slams Gunn's Pulp Mill - Paul Oosting	16
Councils Across Melbourne Oppose Catchment Logging - Simon Birrell	17
Gunn's 20 Case Continues - Adam Beeson	18
Victorian Red Gum Forests: An Historic Victory - Jonathan La Nauze	19
The History of the Barmah-Millewa Campaign - Jonathan La Nauze	20
River Red Gum Forest: the situation in NSW - Georgina Woods	26

Chain Reaction is produced in Melbourne, Newcastle and Perth. We acknowledge the traditional owners of these lands and the fact that Aboriginal land has never been ceded.

The Murray Country Project - Indira Narayan	28
Crayfish and the Battle to Save Brown Mountain - Lauren Caulfield	31
Forest Stewardship Council: a tool for change - Michael Spencer	32
Problems with the Forest Stewardship Council - Anthony Amis	34
The Forgotten Forests of NSW: one step forward, two steps back - Carmel Flint	35
Sub-prime Climate Mitigation: beware conservationists bearing offsets - Paul Winn	36
Australia Must Take the Lead in Stopping the Illegal Timber Trade - Lee Tan	39

other articles

Grim Climate Outcomes at Poznan Climate Conference - Hannah Elvery & Steph Long	41
Australia's Climate Action Summit - Louise Morris	43
FoE Releases Nanotechnology Sunscreen Guide - Georgia Miller	44
Talisman Sabre War Games: US forces give the nod - Kristy Henderson	45

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The board provides big picture thematic and political advice to the CR editors, advice on themes for future editions, as well as helping to ensure that a broader range of sectors/ constituencies are represented in the articles. The CR editorial team are still responsible for content, editing and design and so any problems, omissions or other failures are ours!





EARTH NEWS

Greenies and Bushfires

It has been a hard summer for people and communities across Australia. Floods in Queensland, a relentless hot season across the southern states that saw dozens of people die, and now an estimated 173 people have perished and thousands left homeless from the bushfires in Victoria. A number of FoE friends and members have been hit badly, some have lost their homes or had their properties burnt. A number of others had close calls and weeks of tension as they waited for the fires to move through their area. Others have been fighting fires and caring for those injured and displaced. We extend our thoughts, our empathy and our solidarity to all those affected by the bushfires and floods. The loss of life, habitat and property is tragic.

'Greenies' are once again being blamed for resisting burn-offs that might have helped prevent the fires in Victoria or lessen their intensity. The accusations are generally peddled by far-right ideologues but they gain widespread currency through shock jocks and right-wing newspapers such as *The Australian*.

Guy Rundle wrote the following rebuttal in Criekey on February 12:

1. *The pros and cons of burning off are heavily debated among bushfire specialists.*
2. *Forest fuel levels have no effect on fire speed, which was the main killer in these [Victorian] fires.*
3. *Dryness is a contributor to fire speeds.*
4. *Forestry activities may promote dryness by thinning forest canopies.*
5. *Climate change may be a factor, and if it is, a different set of strategies will need to be employed than if it isn't, so it's worth debating.*
6. *Fires of the "Black Saturday" intensity burn through burnt-off bush because they move at crown and canopy level.*



Margaret Fulton denouncing GM foods at the launch of the True Food Guide. Photo courtesy of Greenpeace.

7. *The burn off levels advocated by green groups, are of the same order as those advocated by those bushfire experts who believe that higher burn-off levels increase risk of fire without giving consequent benefit.*

8. *Burn-off levels do not play a role in urban green votes, and they never have."*

Rundle argues that if *The Australian's* editor Chris Mitchell "was really interested in contributing to minimising deaths in the future, he'd have a genuine and full debate in his pages. Instead he pursues his futile culture wars across the ashen hills."

Friends of the Earth Barmah campaigner Jono La Nauze said:

"The environment movement has a nuanced, evidence-based approach to the issue of fire, and not one Australian environmental organisation is opposed to prescribed burning. In fact, environment groups are engaged in a sophisticated policy debate about where and how prescribed burning can be most effective. We have a huge diversity of ecosystems in Australia, and each of them respond differently to fire. Burning with the wrong frequency can make some types of vegetation more fire-

prone: there is no one-size-fits-all burning regime.

"We also have a range of policy objectives that need to be considered, including ecosystem integrity and impacts on climate change. But no environment group suggests that life and property should be secondary considerations. We also have to use all the other tools in the box as well, including land use and planning."

There are a range of resources on bushfires, fuel reduction and climate change available at: www.myenvironment.net.au.

Lake Cowal Gathering and Protest

28 protesters were arrested over the easter weekend at the seventh Lake Cowal Gathering. They were authorised to enter the mine site by Wiradjuri Traditional Owners of Lake Cowal who have been campaigning against the large-scale mining operation for the past 10 years.

Entering the site at dawn, the protesters climbed the bund walls into the open cut pit whilst Wiradjuri Traditional Owners performed a smoking ceremony

and other protesters blockaded the front gates of the mine.

For more information on the protest: <www.protestbarrick.net/article.php?id=436>
For more information on the Save Lake Cowal campaign <www.savelakecowal.org>
Nat Lowrey <natalie.lowrey@foe.org.au>.

True Food Guide

Greenpeace has released a pocket-sized True Food Guide to facilitate GE-free shopping in the absence of Australian labelling laws for GE foods. Launching the guide on November 22, Margaret Fulton said, "Genetically engineered food threatens everything I stand for. There is enough evidence to tell us that genetically engineered food is not a good idea. The True Food Guide will be our reference to what is safe to eat - not only for us, but for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren".

Copies of the guide are available from Greenpeace by calling 1800 815 151 or from GeneEthics network on 1300 133 868. Copies can also be downloaded from <www.greenpeace.org.au/truefood/> or <www.truefood.org.au>.

50 years of Quaker Service

Australian Quakers' aid and development agency, Quaker Service Australia, celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year, marking a half century of work focused largely on sustainable small-scale agriculture with rural communities around the world.

Their new book, *Friends in deed*, tells the history of this work. Projects covered in the book range from Permaculture training in Vietnam and Cambodia, sustainable agriculture in Uganda, HIV/AIDS education and training in Cambodia and Uganda, English language teaching in Cambodia, environmental education in India to bicultural education with Aboriginal communities in Australia.

Visit the QSA website: <www.qsa.org.au>.

IRENA has 75 Governments as Founding Members

Representatives from 125 governments, along with numerous NGOs, met in Bonn in late January for the founding conference of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). Seventy-five governments signed the statute of IRENA during the ceremony, and more will do so in the near future.

According to the IRENA statute, the agency will promote the widespread and increased adoption and the sustainable use of all forms of renewable energy.

Australia was not one of the 75 countries to sign the IRENA statute. Repeated attempts over a period of about six months to ascertain the Australian government's position on IRENA have been ignored by federal environment minister Peter Garrett. An official from Martin Ferguson's department of energy and resources attended the conference as an observer. Garrett's environment department was not represented.

More information: <www.irena.org>.

Wind, Water and Sun Beat Biofuels, Nuclear and Coal

Mark Jacobson, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Stanford University, has conducted a quantitative, scientific evaluation of the proposed, major, energy-related options by assessing their potential for delivering energy for electricity and vehicles, and also their impacts on global warming, human health, energy security, water supply, space requirements, wildlife, water pollution, reliability and sustainability.

The energy sources that Jacobson found to be the most promising are, in order, wind, concentrated solar (the use of mirrors to heat a fluid), geothermal, tidal, solar photovoltaics (rooftop solar panels), wave and hydroelectric. He recommends against nuclear, coal with carbon capture and sequestration, corn

ethanol and cellulosic ethanol, which is made of prairie grass.

The report can be downloaded at <www.rsc.org/Publishing/Journals/EE/article.asp?doi=b809990c>.

World Can Halt Fossil Fuel Use By 2090

The world could eliminate fossil fuel use by 2090, saving \$18 trillion in future fuel costs and creating a \$360 billion industry that provides half of the world's electricity, the European Renewable Energy Council (EREC) and Greenpeace conclude in a recent report.

Renewable energy could provide all global energy needs by 2090 according to the study, while a more radical scenario could eliminate coal use by 2050 if new power generation plants shifted quickly to renewables.

The report, *Energy [r]evolution 2008: a Sustainable Global Energy Outlook*, is posted at <www.erec.org/documents/publications.html>.

The report's projections for renewables are far more optimistic than those of the International Energy Agency, which forecasts just 13% of energy from renewables in 2030 with fossil fuels staying dominant. However, a recent report released by the Energy Watch Group argues that the IEA, which advises 28 governments on energy policy, is obstructing a global switch to renewable power because of its ties to the oil, gas and nuclear sectors. The report argues that the IEA publishes misleading data on renewables, and that it has consistently underestimated the amount of electricity generated by wind power in its advice to governments. The report was written by Rudolf Rechsteiner, a member of the Swiss parliament.

More information: Rudolf Rechsteiner, December 2008, 'Wind Power in Context - A Clean Revolution in the Energy Sector', <www.energywatchgroup.org> in the publications > reports section.



FOE AUSTRALIA NEWS

Friends of the Earth Australia is a federation of independent local groups. You can join FoE by contacting your local group. For further details on FoEA, see: <www.foe.org.au>. There is a monthly email newsletter which includes details on our campaigns here and around the world. You can subscribe via the FoEA website.

FoE National Meeting

Summer can be a hard time to hold a four-day outdoor planning meeting, but the national gathering was a great success. The January 2009 meeting was held in the Bunya mountains of south-east Queensland. People attended from Brisbane, Melbourne, Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. As part of our review of our governance structures, we have shifted the AGM to the mid year meeting so January is now seen as a time for campaign planning, skill sharing and organisational development.

We held a two-day strategic planning session before the meeting. FoE places great emphasis on developing alliances and working with other organisations and networks, and we spent time considering our approach to alliances and how to strengthen key relationships. In particular this focused on our work with Traditional Owner groups, trade unions, and grassroots groups concerned about climate change as well as how we manage our relations with other environment groups and state and federal governments.

We had a great session called 'thinking the unthinkable', which was an attempt to imagine campaign, economic and political options that seem either far-fetched or otherwise unlikely. We also had a session on emerging technologies such as nanotechnology, synthetic biology and geo-engineering and

the threats they pose to people and environments. We also considered how to 'drought proof' the organisation against the economic downturn.

The national meeting itself saw an excellent strategy meeting on our shared climate campaigning. A key element of this involved agreeing to put our local anti-coal work into a national framework. We prioritised five areas of activity for 2009: coal; climate refugees; trade unions / just transitions and green jobs; contesting false or dangerous solutions to climate change such as agrofuels; and helping to build the climate movement.

In addition, we agreed to develop a nationally co-ordinated membership development program focused on our climate justice project. Other key decisions included agreement to continue developing our relations with our nearest FoE neighbours – especially in PNG and Indonesia and our newest member in the region, in Timor Leste. We set up an interest group on northern Australia to investigate what options there may be for FoE to become more active in this part of the country.

Many thanks to FoE Brisbane for such a productive meeting. The next national gathering will be in late August and hosted by FoE Melbourne.

Dangerous Pesticide used in Swimming Pool Treatment

FoE Australia has called for bans on the use of simazine in swimming pools in Australia. Simazine is a herbicide, registered for use by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Association for a number of uses including swimming pools. Simazine

kills algae in swimming pools, dams, troughs, ponds and freshwater aquariums. The US EPA banned its use in swimming pools in 1994. FoE researcher Anthony Amis said: "It is deeply disturbing that simazine is still registered for use in swimming pools in Australia. A US EPA risk assessment 14 years ago concluded that water treated with simazine algacides represented an unacceptable cancer and non-cancer health risk to children and adults. Simazine hasn't been allowed in swimming pools in the US since 1994, yet it still remains registered in Australia."

More information: <www.foe.org.au/chemicals>.

FoE Nanotechnology Project Updates

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have announced that they will assess the health and environment risks of the use of nanotechnology in food and agriculture at a special meeting in May this year. FoE Australia welcomes this overdue examination of the toxicity problems posed by nano-ingredients, additives and agricultural chemicals.

However, at a time of unprecedented global food crisis, it is critical that this inquiry also examines the implications that nanofood and agriculture has for food sovereignty. We have stressed that it is particularly important that FAO address the questions of whether or not nanotechnology is likely to further undermine local communities' capacity to control food production to meet local food needs, and to further concentrate corporate control across the agriculture

and food systems. We have also called for FAO and WHO to examine the broader public health consequences of the aggressive marketing of highly processed, nano-fortified foods in preference to efforts to support greater consumption of minimally processed fresh foods and vegetables. At a national level, we have also continued to call on Australia's food regulator FSANZ to keep untested, unlabelled nano-ingredients out of Australian foods and food packaging.

Nanotechnology proponents promote it as a clean technology that will help reduce use of energy, water, toxic chemicals and the production of greenhouse gases. Unfortunately, early evidence shows that the fabrication of nanoparticles is actually energy and water intensive, and both uses and produces large amounts of toxic chemicals.

To date there has been little intentional large-scale release of nanoparticles into the environment, but that may be about to change. In response to growing alarm about climate change, in recent months previously sceptical scientists have begun advocating 'geo-engineering' or 'climate manipulation' technologies, some of which use nanoparticles. There is a de facto moratorium negotiated through the UN Convention on Biological Diversity on using iron nanoparticles or urea in commercial 'ocean fertilisation' (dumping these materials in the ocean to trigger a giant algal plume that will supposedly suck up carbon dioxide). But there is as yet no agreement about how to police the moratorium, or what to do about other geo-engineering fields such as injection of sulphates into the upper atmosphere.

As the debate about the climate and ecological implications and applications of nanotechnology heats up, FoEA will continue working for a sane, ecologically sound and socially just approach to its management.

More information: <www.foe.org.au/chemicals>.



Rockhole recovery trip, Ceduna, South Australia. Photo: Cat Beaton

Rockhole Recovery Trip

Every March and September, members of Aboriginal Traditional Owner organisation Kokatha Mula Nation and conservation group West Mallee Protection (a FoE affiliate) take interested volunteers on a 4WD trip 'out the back' of Ceduna, in far west SA. These trips, called Rockhole Recovery Trips, are hands-on experiences, where participants help clean out rockholes. The work to be done varies from trip to trip.

On the last Rockhole Recovery Tour, in September 2008, the group spent cheerful days digging out the sand at a site called Minya Inla - a whole team of kids, greenies, family members and Ceduna locals were armed with rakes, shovels, buckets, and brooms.

The next Rockhole Recovery Trip takes place from September 26. To register your interest contact <westmallee@gmail.com> as soon as possible!

Radioactive Exposure Tour 2009

Friends of the Earth is hosting the annual Radioactive Exposure Tour from May 15-25. Since the 1980s, these 'radtours' have exposed thousands of people to the realities of 'radioactive racism' and to the environmental impacts of the nuclear industry.

After travelling from Melbourne to Adelaide then heading north to the SA

desert, we'll visit BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam uranium mine at Roxby Downs, the largest uranium deposit in the world. We'll watch sunset over Lake Eyre and see the Mound Springs - oases which are fed by the underlying Great Artesian Basin and host unique flora and fauna. Sadly, some of the Mound Springs have been adversely effected or destroyed altogether by the massive water take for the Olympic Dam mine (35 million litres daily). The water is taken from Arabunna land and we'll spend time with Arabunna elder Uncle Kevin Buzzacott, President of the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance.

We'll hear first-hand accounts of the British nuclear bomb tests from Maralinga veteran and whistle-blower Avon Hudson, and learn about ongoing WMD proliferation risks arising from the uranium mining and export industry. We'll camp in the beautiful Gammon Ranges and visit the not-so-beautiful Beverley uranium mine. We'll hear about the ongoing struggle to prevent uranium mining in the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary, and we'll camp in the Sanctuary and in one of the gorges further south.

We are particularly keen for you to come along if you are involved, or are considering getting involved, in anti-nuclear campaigning. If you're interested in joining in this year's radtour, visit <www.foe.org.au/anti-nuclear> and contact Kasey Sparks, <writewithya@gmail.com>, 0425 862834.



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FOE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Friends of the Earth International is a federation of autonomous organisations from all over the world. Our members, in 77 countries, campaign on the most urgent environmental and social issues, while working towards sustainable societies. <www.foei.org>



Gas flaring in Nigeria. Photo: FoEI

Help Stop the Attack on Gaza!

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) joins Pengon / FoE Palestine and the Palestinian people to call on the Israeli government to halt the attacks on Gaza and the massacre of innocent people. Over 1,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 3,000 wounded.

You can sign the Avaaz.org petition, 'Gaza: Stop the bloodshed', at <www.avaaz.org/en/gaza_time_for_peace>. The FoEI statement on the violence in Gaza is posted at <www.foei.org/en/blog/stop-the-assault-on-gaza>.

Stop Gas Flaring in the Niger Delta Now!

FoEI is calling for an immediate end to the destruction of the environment and the lives of the people living in the Niger Delta. Please join us in calling on the President of Nigeria to end gas flaring in all Niger Delta communities. Visit <www.foei.org/en/get-involved/take-action/stop-flaring>.

More information: <www.poisonfire.org>, <www.foei.org/en/publications/pdfs/gasnigeria.pdf>.

Protest Against Indonesian Pulp and Paper Plantation Violence

On December 18, the village of Suluk Bongkal was attacked by hundreds of

armed police and paramilitaries with firearms and tear-gas, and fire-bombed from a helicopter. Hundreds of houses have been burned down, two toddlers were killed, hundreds have fled, others were detained, and refugees later had stones dropped on them from a helicopter. This serious human rights abuse is linked to the plantation company Sinar Mas and in particular to a pulp and paper plantation run by their subsidiary, Asia Pulp and Paper. Please help to stop this violence by sending a protest letter to the Indonesian authorities. To send a letter, go to: <www.regenwald.org/international/englisch/index.php>.

Stop Repeat of Massive Coal Sludge Spill in Tennessee

Late last year, a large swathe of Tennessee was flooded with toxic coal ash when a containment pond ruptured. The massive spill - bigger than the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska - covered hundreds of acres of land, knocking homes off of their foundations and flowing into streams and the Clinch and Tennessee rivers. There are more than a thousand similar dumps in 46 US states, many of which are unmonitored and unregulated. Please help FoE US end America's use of coal by taking action today: <http://action.foe.org/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=26388>.

New Climate and Forest Publication: REDD Myths

In December, the FoEI climate and energy program released a comprehensive critical analysis of United Nations negotiations on REDD "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries" mechanisms. The reports were distributed widely at the UN talks in Poznan. The report is available in English, French and Spanish at <www.foei.org/en/media/archive/2008/forest-carbon-trading-exposed>.

Worst EU Lobbying Awards Ceremony

The winners of the 2008 Worst EU Lobbying Awards were revealed at a December ceremony in Brussels. More than 8,500 people took part in the online public vote. The Award for the Worst EU Lobbying 2008, with more than 50% of the votes, went to a joint nomination for the agrofuel lobbyists, the Malaysian Palm Oil Council, Brazilian sugar barons UNICA and energy company Abengoa Bioenergy for their use of misleading information and greenwash. The Worst Conflict of Interest Award 2008 goes to Piia-Noora Kauppi, a Finnish MP in the European Parliament, who has been promoting the interests of her future employer, a banking lobbying group, while still an active member of the Parliament. More information is posted at <www.corporateeurope.org>.

forest feature



© Leah-Anne Thompson

Time For Fresh Thinking On Forests

Margaret Blakers

For the past decade, Australian governments have hidden behind Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) to avoid having to make decisions about forests and the wood products industry. It would be hard to find a worse example of policy failure, political cowardice, mismanagement and waste.

But the times are changing, forcing forests back onto the national agenda however much the old parties wish it away. Here are just a few of the converging crises surrounding the issue.

1. Forest activists are defending some of the most beautiful forests in the country. In Tasmania, Premier Bartlett ordered the bulldozers into the Upper Florentine, a magnificent old growth forest that even notorious pro-logger Premier Lennon didn't touch.

In Victoria, Premier Brumby is destroying forests at Brown Mountain that have been conservation icons since the 1970s – he was forced to declare a two-week moratorium by the discovery of four threatened species. In NSW, Premier Rees presided over logging of koala habitat near Bermagui in the state's south-east and has more planned. In WA, the line in the sand is Chester forest, not far from Margaret River. In each case, blockades have been established and community support has rallied behind the forest defenders. Across the country, scores of people have been arrested.

2. Legal action is intensifying. The last five years have seen Senator Bob Brown's landmark Wielangta Forest case challenging the Tasmanian RFA (www.on-trial.info) and major actions by the Wilderness Society and

Lawyers for Forests against Gunns' proposed pulp mill. In December 2004, Gunns sued 20 environmental organisations and citizens with a \$6.4 million writ, just one day before they applied for approval to build their pulp mill (www.gunns20.org). In January 2009, Gunns sued another 13 environmentalists who have in turn lodged a counter claim alleging that Gunns made misleading representations when it claimed that no old growth forest and no old growth logs would be used in its pulp mill.

3. Pressure to protect threatened species like the Swift Parrot is growing. This migratory bird breeds only in Tasmania, preferring extensive areas of old growth forest close to abundantly flowering bluegums. Forestry Tasmania's RFA logging is the single most important threat to the survival of the species and there is strong evidence that it is already sliding from 'endangered' to 'critically endangered' (www.greeninstitute.com.au). The RFA is protecting the logging, not the parrot – an unsustainable situation, replicated around the country wherever RFA logging and threatened species are in conflict.

4. In the mid-1990s, the looming glut of softwood sawlogs presented the opportunity for governments to solve the conflict over native forest logging by moving into plantations. It was rejected. Today, 80% of our sawn timber and wood panels are made using plantations and 80-95% of the cut from Australia's main native forest logging regions is woodchipped.

Now the looming glut of hardwood plantation pulplogs again offers governments a choice. According to the government's own figures, the pulplog supply from Australia's hardwood plantations will leap from the current cut of around four million cubic metres per year to 14 million within the next year: more than double the volume woodchipped from Australia's native forests each year. This is the result of flawed policy, supporting tree-planting through managed investment schemes attracting over \$2 billion in public funding via tax deductions. Now the managed investment companies are in severe financial difficulty, with wood they can't sell. Australia's existing plantations can supply virtually all of our wood needs – the only barrier to an economically superior and lower conflict industry is native forest logging.

5. As markets for native forest woodchips decline, the industry is getting set to move into fuelwood and biomass. In WA, Griffin Bluwaters has won a tender for 250,000 tonnes per year of native forest wood to burn in its Collie coal-fired power station. Forest furnaces are on the drawing board in Tasmania, including one as part of Gunns' proposed pulp mill; and southern NSW at SEFE (the Eden woodchip mill). Forestry

Tasmania has exported native forest logs as fuelwood and has committed to supply up to 600,000 tonnes per year to Gunns subject to a trial finishing in mid-2009. NSW conservationists have already succeeded in persuading Country Energy to reject 'dead koala' electricity; electricity retailers around the country will be asked to follow suit.

6. Native forest logging and the establishment of vast plantation monocultures both result in a dried up landscape as young rapidly growing trees suck up water. Old forests use relatively little water and play a role in promoting rainfall. Unlike other water users, plantation growers and native forest loggers do not have to pay for the water they intercept – an unsustainable situation in a drying climate.

The climate crisis

Overlaying all is the climate crisis. Again, government has got it wrong, allocating native forests for wood production and plantations for carbon storage instead of the other way around. Under the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme – now rejected by most of the conservation movement – growers of plantations established since 1990 on previously cleared land could choose to join the scheme and claim carbon credits. It turns out that, at quite low carbon prices, it would be more economic for a plantation-owner to grow carbon than wood. Meanwhile, native forest logging and clearing can continue as a major source of greenhouse gas emissions without penalty.

The climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis, the water crisis, and the looming plantation wood glut all lead to the same conclusion: it's time for governments to throw out last century's failed policies and apply some fresh thinking. Keep native forests intact for carbon storage, biodiversity and water. Encourage revegetation where it will be permanent and enhance landscape resilience without compromising food production. Grow trees for wood supply, preferably with domestic processing for regional investment and jobs, and preferably integrated into a sustainable agricultural land management regime once the existing monocultures are logged. Get rid of tax breaks for plantations, whether for wood production or carbon storage (so-called 'carbon sinks'). Establish a large fund to look after native forests and other natural ecosystems in perpetuity (another regional employment generator) and to pay for the transition out of native forest logging and clearing.

It's not hard!

Margaret Blakers is Director of the Green Institute. <www.greeninstitute.com.au>, <margaret.blakers@bigpond.com>.

More reading: The Forest Wars, Judith Ajani, MUP, 2007.

New Alliance of Forest Groups Strengthens Climate Campaign



Camp Florentine, Tasmania. Photo by Alan Lesheim.

In the two days leading up to the 2009 climate summit, more than 70 representatives from forest groups around Australia met in Canberra, forming the Australian Forests for Climate Alliance (AFCA) and calling for federal leadership on forest protection, together with deep emissions cuts to mitigate climate change.

“Malcolm Turnbull has finally recognised this week that the way we manage our landscape is vital for solving climate change. On this the Opposition are a step ahead of the Rudd government – yet both parties fail to seize the opportunity to take quick and effective climate action by protecting Australia’s native forests,” said Jael Johnson, spokesperson for the WA Forest Alliance and AFCA.

“Forest protection is a vital link in developing credible Australian policies to tackle climate change”, said Alliance spokesperson Lauren Caulfield. “Logging and clearing native forests releases huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, causing climate change.”

The Alliance has called for the scrapping of national proposals to burn native forests for power that are under consideration by COAG.

“Burning native forests for power generation is another ridiculous proposal cooked up by a logging industry desperate for alternative markets for woodchips,” said Prue Acton, spokesperson for South-East Region Conservation Alliance, an AFCA member. “Native forest furnaces are bad for climate, bad for wildlife and must be rejected by government, energy retailers and consumers.”

The Alliance will be launching a series of campaigns to achieve these objectives in the coming months, including a national campaign to combat forest-fuelled power stations.

“While we need to urgently reduce emissions from burning fossil fuels, protecting natural carbon stored in forests and woodlands and stopping emissions from logging is critical,” said Warrick Jordon, spokesperson for the Huon Valley Environment Centre, an AFCA member.

For more information, or to get involved please contact <forestsandclimate@gmail.com>.

Friends of the Earth invites you to join the ACTIVE FRIENDS PROGRAM

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The Active Friends Program is one of the best means to support the current and future work of Friends of the Earth. It involves a regular monthly donation a self-nominated amount.

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How can you join the Active Friends Program?

To join the Active Friends Program, please fill in the ‘Active Friends’ section on the reverse side of this page and post to: Friends of the Earth, PO Box 222, Fitzroy, 3065. You can cancel this pledge at any time by contacting the FoE office. All Active Friends donations are fully tax deductible.

www.foe.org.au

Friends of the Earth Australia

An aerial photograph showing a dirt logging road cutting through a dense forest. The road is surrounded by tall trees, and there are some vehicles and equipment visible on the road. The forest appears to be a mix of old-growth and younger trees.

Tasmania's Old Growth Forests

Ula Majewski

New Road in the Upper Florentine. Photo: *Still Wild Still Threatened*

Tasmania's forests are at the centre of one of the most protracted and conflict-ridden debates over natural resource management in Australia's history. This debate has again reached crisis point, with international concerns raised over recent road building operations in the Upper Florentine Valley.

In July 2008, the World Heritage Committee released a crucial decision relating to these tall-eucalypt old growth forests, along with those located in the Styx and Weld Valleys, requesting the Tasmanian and Australian governments seriously consider an extension of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area to include these forests. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature called for a consideration of a moratorium on logging in these forests of potential outstanding universal value. These calls from the planet's peak conservation bodies were ignored by federal environment minister Peter Garrett and Tasmanian environment minister Michelle O'Byrne.

Early in the morning on January 12, over 60 police raided a peaceful community blockade in the Upper Florentine Valley. Camp Florentine, constructed in a logging coupe, has been defending the globally-recognised old growth forests of the Upper Florentine for over two years. The blockade was constructed of tree sits cabled to monopoles, a suspended monopole and tripods, three 'dragons' (blockading devices that usually consists of a car body, a pipe and a lot of cement) and a tunnel dug deep beneath the existing logging road. The raid came as Forestry Tasmania moved machinery into the forest, attempting to build a new 4 km logging road to open the valley to industrial-scale destruction.

The Upper Florentine Valley contains hundreds of hectares of threatened old growth tall eucalypt forest and old growth rainforest, significant karst water systems, a wild river and outstanding examples of Indigenous and European cultural heritage. The valley is bordered on three sides by spectacular mountain ranges located within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. These tall eucalypt old growth forests also store huge amounts of carbon.

Since January 12, over 30 activists and community members have been arrested in the fight to protect these ancient ecosystems. In an Australian first, activist Adrian King spent 36 hours underground in the tunnel. As at February 11, four tree-sitters were still perched high in the canopy of these irreplaceable forests. On January 18 and 31, over 500 community members conducted a peaceful mass walk-in to the site, entering Forestry Tasmania's 'exclusion zone' to protest against the continued devastation, woodchipping and burning of some of Australia's most precious natural heritage. Rolling actions have taken place every single day since the blockade was raided, with forest defenders locking onto road building machinery; new tree sits and blockading structures erected; and community members walking into the site and refusing to leave. In Tasmania's capital city, Hobart, activists scaled the roof of Parliament House and hung a giant 'Save the Upper Florentine' banner.

International support for the ancient forests of the Upper Florentine was demonstrated in London on January 19 and 26, as British activists presented the Australian High Commission with petitions, climbed trees and unfurled banners to send the Australian government a message that

the destruction of Tasmania's carbon dense old growth forests is a global issue.

Lies, damned lies and forest statistics

A number of statistics are utilised *ad nauseum* by the forestry industry and certain governmental bodies to obscure from public view exactly what is happening in our publicly-owned tall-eucalypt old growth and high conservation value forests. Many of the RFA old growth forests protected in Tasmania consist of trees of little use to the timber industry. However, RFA old growth and high conservation value forests that contain species highly desirable to the forestry industry have been poorly reserved. Despite repeated requests for solid evidence supporting such 'statistics' as "90% of the Upper Florentine Valley is reserved from logging," data and maps supporting such claims have failed to materialise. We do know, however, that most of the 'protected' country in the Upper Florentine consists of buttongrass, scrub and high-altitude moorlands, with very few tall-eucalypt forests reserved.

So, here are some lesser-known statistics concerning these globally recognised forests, which are owned by the people of Tasmania and managed by Forestry Tasmania. Only 22% of Tasmania's original tall-eucalypt forests have been reserved. In 2006, approximately 61,000 hectares of tall-eucalypt RFA old growth forests remained unprotected, with an additional 32,000 hectares located in non-secure informal reserves.

Ten thousand hectares of tall-eucalypt RFA old growth forest have been lost since 1996, predominantly as a result of industrial logging operations. Over 84% of the timber extracted from our publicly-owned native forests is woodchipped, with only 4% becoming solid wood products. The majority of the woodchips come from mature or old growth trees. The overwhelming majority of old growth woodchips generated in Tasmania are exported by Gunns Limited.

Due to increased mechanisation and technological developments, the logging industry has become less dependent on people, resulting in massive job losses. In 1997, a state-government memo said only eight forestry jobs would be generated by logging the Upper Florentine. Today, that number is even less. Yet taxpayer funds are being used to subsidise building roads and felling forests in the area.

Exporting woodchips

Tasmania is the largest exporter of woodchips in Australia, exporting more than all the other states combined. In 2007, Forestry Tasmania released figures showing wood from publicly-owned native forests would be sold to Gunns, the world's largest exporter of hardwood chips (3.7 million tonnes in 2007/08), from between \$12.50-13.75 per tonne from January 2008. Managing Director of Forestry

Tasmania, Bob Gordon, has also confirmed that at least 500,000 tonnes of woodchips sourced from publicly-owned old growth forests will be exported annually.

Although Gunns cut the majority of Tasmania's 170 forest harvesting businesses' long-term woodchip contracts by over 40% in 2006, the company reported a \$75 million annual net profit for the 2006-07 financial year. Over the past few months, Tasmanian forest contractors have been lobbying the Australian government for assistance packages to exit the industry. These calls have been largely ignored. Over the past decade, Forestry Tasmania and the forestry industry have received at least \$326 million in federal and state-based taxpayer funded subsidies through the Tasmanian RFA and Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement financial packages alone. Last year, Forestry Tasmania, the government business enterprise responsible for managing our public forests in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner, reported an annual loss in excess of \$38 million.

Taken together, these factors begin to suggest a markedly different picture to that propagated by key players in the forestry industry and their counterparts in government. This alternative picture has little to do with conflict between loggers and greenies and everything to do with local jobs, taxpayers' dollars and publicly-owned old growth forests being destroyed by Forestry Tasmania – identified by ANU economist Judith Ajani as "a profitless wood supply service" – and Gunns Ltd., to maximise profits for the largest and wealthiest corporation on the island, predominantly through the export of enormous volumes of woodchips.

In November, an alliance of Tasmanian environmental groups, including Still Wild Still Threatened and the Huon Valley Environment Centre, put a forest solution proposal on the table. This was an attempt to open up a space for mature and intelligent discussion with the aim of finally resolving this long-running debate over our old growth and high conservation value forests. We are still waiting for a response from Premier Bartlett and Prime Minister Rudd.

The fight to protect our precious old growth forests continues in Tasmania. For more information on the campaign to save Tasmania's old growth and high conservation value forests, and to see what you can do to help, please visit: <www.stillwildstillthreatened.org>, <www.huon.org>, <www.nativeforest.net>, <www.coolforests.org>, <www.et.org.au/node/41> or contact us at <stillwilds_tillthreatened@gmail.com> or <centre@huon.org>.

Ula Majewski is a Still Wild Still Threatened forest campaigner and Triabunna 13 defendant.

Pesticides and the Tasmanian Forestry Industry

Alison Bleaney

Toxic chemicals are used extensively in plantation establishment and maintenance. Forestry monoculture plantation acreages in Tasmanian water catchments have increased rapidly over the past decade and now cover approximately 270,000 ha. This expansion is ongoing mainly with an introduced eucalypt species (*E. nitens*) – for example a 260 ha coup in South George will soon be cleared and re-sown with *E. nitens*, in the same area where water pollution with simazine occurred in 1994.

The Tasmanian community is looking for reassurance from the Tasmanian River Catchment Water Quality Initiative (TRCWQI) that the pesticides being used in forestry and their off-target migration are safe. The TRCWQI is a two-year joint program between several Tasmanian government departments (including Forestry Tasmania), the University of Tasmania, and the federal Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts to investigate the use and fate of pesticides.

As only four of the Tasmanian water catchments do not have plantations, the need to protect water catchments from all chemicals that may have a detrimental effect on ecosystems is of paramount importance.

Aerial spraying pesticides onto catchments (hilly, steeply sloping, winding rivers and gullies) which provide drinking water is no longer regarded internationally as best practice. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency's website; "The drift of spray from pesticide applications can expose people, wildlife, and the environment to pesticide residues that can cause health and environmental effects and property damage."

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) states: "... the APVMA recognises that measurable off-target spray drift can occur at times even when the product is applied with care." The APVMA recognises that pesticide vapour and off-target movement of pesticides by other means (carried away in soil particles, moved by wind or running water or direct evaporation) can present risks even if the chemicals are applied properly.

Climate change and drought will accentuate problems associated with predicting impacts from exposure to pesticide use. Increasingly unpredictable rain patterns will make modelling and risk assessment difficult, and with increased reliance on groundwater resources we can no longer rely on dilution as being the solution to chemical pollution.



Pesticide spraying, Tasmania. Photo by Pete Godfrey

Health effects of pesticides

The international scientific evidence for pesticides acting as endocrine disruptors and immune system modulators affecting sexual development, immune diseases and cancer means that these effects are no longer hypothetical.

The biological effects of chemical mixtures can be unpredictable and more toxic than the additive effects of single chemicals and have not been fully studied. The APVMA does not test for the toxicity of mixtures in their risk assessments of pesticides. Hormone disruptors work at extremely low concentrations, even down to 0.000001 parts per billion. Atrazine and simazine have been shown to cause chemical castration of male frogs and other animals at 0.1 ppb. Unborn babies and children are the most sensitive to these adverse effects.

The Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW) cannot produce a comprehensive list of all pesticides used by the forestry industry. Eleven are listed in the TRCWQI as being used by forestry; atrazine, alpha-cypermethrin, clopyralid, fluazifop, glyphosate, haloxyfop, hexazinone, metsulfuron-methyl, simazine, sulfometuron-methyl and terbacil. Many of these pesticides are endocrine disruptors, reproductive toxins, immunotoxic and change gene functioning.

The DPIW continues to detect pesticides e.g. simazine, atrazine, metsulfuron-methyl, hexazinone and terbacil in Tasmanian rivers during routine monitoring along with other pesticides such as MCPA, 2,4-D, and diazinon, despite sampling being unrelated to pesticide application and directed towards water soluble chemicals. At least another 118 pesticides are used in agriculture along with an unknown number of toxic wetting agents (e.g. nonylphenol) used by both the forestry and agricultural industries. No sediment sampling is undertaken for chemicals with high soil adsorptions. No comprehensive information is available for pesticides used in individual catchments, including the amount and timing of application, even in those used for

drinking water and aquaculture. No rural water treatment plants in Tasmania are able to remove pesticides from raw drinking water.

It has recently been revealed that terbuthylazine (known to be an endocrine disruptor and immunotoxic) has been used in Tasmania for 2-3 years by forestry, with no public acknowledgement of its use until the Break O'Day Catchment Risk Group discovered its use from a recent pesticide spill in the George River catchment. It is not registered for general use by the APVMA for forestry, but is used under an APVMA research permit with conditions of use protected by a commercial-in-confidence agreement.

Similarly, fluazifop is listed by the TRCWQI as being used by forestry but not registered for use by forestry. Spinosad (an endocrine disruptor) is known to be used, but not listed by any party as being used by the forestry industry. 1080 poison is not even mentioned, despite being widely used by private timber companies and by the DPIW for fox baiting.

It has recently come to light that forestry have been using tebufenozide for at least five years in Tasmanian plantations. Tebufenozide is an insecticide, a chitin synthetise inhibitor, and so affects fungi, crustaceans and helminths as well as insects. It has a long half-life in soil (over 400 days in aerobic soil) and has the potential to pollute groundwater. It is very toxic to aquatic organisms. It is not listed for use in Tasmania by the TRCWQI.

The Chemicals Branch of the DPIW has given permission for all of these chemicals to be used.

Fragmented and chaotic regulation

With a national water crisis now in evidence, attempts by the federal government and state/territory governments to protect ecosystems and drinking water from toxic chemical mixtures are fragmented and chaotic.

Eighteen years after the Senate Select Committee Report on Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals, and six years after the report by Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering ('Pesticide Use in Australia'), the key regulatory issues are still the same:

- There is no national policy with regard to pesticide usage.
- There is no national policy with regard to pesticides that can be applied aerially within a national regulatory framework that determines pesticide control and usage.
- There is no national registration scheme certifying competency of pesticide applicators, aerially or ground based.
- There is no national comprehensive monitoring program of environmental or human health related to chemical exposures (including mixtures).

- There is no comprehensive integrated national adverse incident reporting system that includes all chemicals and their impacts on environmental and human health.

Current Australian regulations are overlapping and cumbersome with many loopholes and are difficult to negotiate. All this is costly to the government and stakeholders and does not allow for the adequate protection of one of our most valuable assets, our water catchments. Water users are also taxpayers but do not have any say in water quality, yet pay for all water used regardless of its quality.

Aerial spraying of toxic chemicals in water catchments should cease and all toxic chemical applications should be looked at from a whole-of-catchment management approach.

It is essential that comprehensive national policies to protect human and environmental health, including streamlined and workable regulatory frameworks, are put into place as soon as possible.

It is no longer acceptable to allow the application of poisonous chemicals (including pesticides) that contaminate water catchments only to turn one's back on the consequences after application.

We need to ensure that regulations provide the outcomes that were intended and that protection of human and environmental health comes before protecting business interests.

Some progress has recently been made in Europe. The British High Court ruled in November 2008 that the British government has been acting unlawfully in its policy in relation to the use of pesticides in crop spraying, and that public health, in particular that of rural communities exposed to pesticides from living in proximity to regularly sprayed fields, is not being protected.

In December 2008, the European Union voted for a three year deadline for replacing products containing hazardous (endocrine disrupting, immunotoxic, genotoxic and cancer producing) substances, if safer alternatives exist. The EU also voted for a general ban on aerial crop spraying with exceptions requiring approval by the authorities, buffer zones to protect aquatic environments and drinking water from pesticides and a ban – or minimum pesticide use – in public areas such as parks, sports grounds, schools, and hospitals. France banned all triazine herbicides in 2001.

Dr Alison Bleaney has worked as a GP for 30 years and is the spokesperson for the Break O'Day Catchment Risk Group, formed in 2004 in response to issues affecting drinking water quality and local catchment issues.



Gunns Targets Triabunna 13

Jenny Weber

Nine of the Triabunna 13 with Australian Greens leader Bob Brown, January 2009.
Photo by Matthew Newton <www.matthewnewton.com.au>

Tasmania's giant logging and woodchipping company, Gunns Ltd, issued a law suit against 13 forest activists in January. The activists engaged in a peaceful act of civil disobedience that halted work at the Triabunna woodchip mill in December. Gunns is claiming damages for trespass and seeking an injunction that will prevent the defendants from entering its property and land holdings.

The Triabunna action was taken to highlight the immense amount of carbon released from the logging of old growth forest, the pitiful nature of the Australian government's emissions reduction targets, and Gunns ongoing assault on the remaining wild areas of Tasmania's Southern Forests.

Seven of the activists were arrested, while eight others were standing outside the mill with a banner. Six activists who were not arrested gave their names to police, had their personal details given to Gunns by Tasmania Police and are subsequently being sued. In a clear breach of privacy and infringement of citizens' rights, people who complied with police directions are now facing a harsh civil suit.

The people who were arrested at Triabunna were acting on their grave concerns about climate change by resisting laws that permit ongoing environmental destruction. The Triabunna 13 defendants engaged in non-violent civil disobedience to expose Gunns contribution to climate change. The logging, burning and woodchipping of old growth forest releases massive quantities of carbon. In Tasmania, Gunns is the driver of this irresponsible and

morally reprehensible pursuit of short term profit. Gunns hides these impacts behind official carbon accounting figures which exclude the logging of native forest.

Gunns continues to devastate huge tracts of carbon dense old growth forests and to woodchip around 85% of the timber. Eighty percent of Australians are opposed to old growth logging in Tasmania yet Gunns continues to destroy iconic valleys such as the Weld, Upper Florentine and the Styx.

The lawsuit against the Triabunna 13 comes four years after the Gunns 20 case began. The Gunns 20 case started in 2004 against 20 individuals and organisations in response to their efforts to protect Tasmania's forests, and continues for 13 individuals and organisations.

A legal fighting fund has been launched to raise the fees that will be incurred by the Triabunna 13 defendants. The fund will be administered by the Huon Valley Environment Centre and all donations will pay for legal costs, which will run into thousands of dollars. The Huon Valley Environment Centre is a defendant in the Gunns 20 case, and has first-hand knowledge of the difficulties involved in fighting such a case with limited resources.

Please make your donation online at <www.huon.org> or post a cheque or money order made payable to Huon Valley Environment Centre. The postal address is PO Box 217, Huonville, Tasmania, 7109.

CSIRO Expert Slams Gunn's Pulp Mill

Paul Oosting

Gunns Limited is proposing to build a native-forest-based, chlorine-bleaching pulp mill in Tasmania, Australia. The pulp mill is currently one of the most controversial issues in Australia and is opposed by the majority of people.

The project recently received federal government approvals for construction but not for operation. However, Gunns has indicated it will begin construction of the project as soon as it secures finance for the project. Gunns has not yet completed critical scientific work on how the pulp mill pollution will impact on marine life and the fishing industry. The Australian government should put in place measures to ensure that Gunns cannot begin construction of the pulp mill prior to these studies being completed.

Dr Mike Herzfeld, the CSIRO's leading oceanographer and a member of the federal government's Independent Expert Group on the pulp mill, released his report into the impact of toxic pollution from Gunns' pulp mill on January 29. The Herzfeld report confirmed the pulp mill would breach permit conditions set for the marine environment and pollute the coastline of Tasmania and Flinders Island.

In January 2008, federal environment minister Peter Garrett identified serious concerns about the impact Gunns' proposed pulp mill would have on the marine environment and insisted that more scientific work be completed before he would give full approval to operate the pulp mill. Despite this he granted Gunns further approvals for its unpopular project, allowing the company to begin construction at any time.

The Herzfeld report into the impact of Gunns pulp mill on the marine environment found that:

"This creates the possibility for high concentrations (of effluent) to be carried significant distances from the source, and will certainly reach Commonwealth waters (and the coast) under conducive forcing conditions.

"Based on criteria prescribed in the State Pulp Mill Permits (2007), maximum effluent concentration for Chlorate (the most prescriptive constituent in terms of mixing zone extent) and target dilutions prescribed by GHD, the modelling indicates that during the periods simulated the effluent dispersion would be in breach of the State permit conditions on an almost daily basis. There is every reason to expect that the mechanisms responsible for these exceedances would apply in other periods."

Garrett has allowed the ludicrous situation where construction of the mill can begin without a full understanding of the impacts that running the mill would have on the marine

environment and native forest ecosystems. Garrett has put the cart before the horse; for construction to begin before he knows all of the environmental impacts.

Yet despite Gunns desire to begin construction of their forest-hungry pulp mill as soon as possible, there are now seven major obstacles stopping the project proceeding:

1. There is a challenge in the Tasmanian Supreme Court by Environment Tasmania Inc. and three Tamar Valley landowners.
2. A verdict is yet to be delivered in a Federal Court challenge by Lawyers for Forests.
3. Federal government approval to operate the pulp mill has not yet been granted. Gunns has been given until March 2011 to complete assessment work related to the impact effluent would have on the marine environment.
4. The West Tamar Council has refused to approve access to council land by Gunns for construction of its water pipeline.
5. Several Tamar Valley landowners are refusing to allow Gunns to build its pipelines across their land.
6. Gunns has been unable to raise the \$2.2 billion required to build the pulp mill.
7. The project is opposed by the majority of Australians. This fact is consistently reflected in independent polling.

Become a Super Activist!

Right now we need the support of people like you, from all parts of Australia, to help ensure this project doesn't proceed. We want you to become a Super Activist!

Every year a minimum 9% of your income is contributed to your superannuation. Today, around \$1 trillion is invested by Australians in superannuation funds. Many of these investments may directly contradict your personal values. For instance, approximately 40% of Gunns' shareholders are superannuation funds.

You may not realise it, but it is through superannuation and other forms of investment that major companies' activities, including socially and environmentally destructive activities, are underwritten.

Fortunately, you don't have to settle for this. In 2005 the federal government introduced Super Choice legislation. This means you now have the right to decide how to invest your retirement money.

By becoming a Super Activist, you can hold your superfund accountable for the investments they make on

SUPERACTIVIST

NEW ADVENTURES IN THE FIGHT TO STOP CLIMATE CHANGE AND SAVE AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE FORESTS.



your behalf. The best thing about this is that research has shown long-term returns have been consistently higher for investors who have chosen funds that explicitly take environmental, social and governance factors into account when choosing investments.

Recently, over 40,000 Australians helped convince the ANZ bank to decide against funding Gunns' proposed pulp mill. This shows that the genuine actions of a committed group of people really can make a difference.

Following on from the successful campaign to encourage ANZ, Westpac, NAB and Commonwealth Bank not to fund Gunns proposed pulp mill in Tasmania, we now need your support to get the superannuation industry to end its support for the destruction of Australia's irreplaceable native forests. Go to <www.wilderness.org.au/superactivist> today and mobilise your financial power as a Super Activist!

Paul Oosting is the Wilderness Society's pulp mill campaigner.

Councils Across Melbourne Oppose Catchment Logging

Simon Birrell

Clearfell logging of native forests in Melbourne's water supply catchments reduces the water supply for four million Melbourne residents. Economic studies have shown that the water lost is worth more than the combined annual value of sawlog and woodchips that are sourced from clearfell logged forests in the catchments.

After 16 years of debate and public concern, the Victorian government released hydrology research for all Melbourne's catchments in July 2008. The studies found that if logging ended in 2009/10, the annual water gain for Melbourne in 40 years would be 16 gigalitres, equivalent to the annual water consumption of a city the size of Ballarat (94,000 people). Melbourne Water is currently spending \$100 million on the Tarago Treatment Plant to increase Melbourne's water supply by the same amount. Over time the annual water gain from stopping logging in water catchments would increase from 16 to 40 gigalitres.

This is water that can be gained without the need to build new expensive and controversial infrastructure such as energy-intensive desalination plants or taking water from the Murray Goulburn basin.

The scientific and economic debate regarding the need to ban logging in Melbourne catchments has been won many times – now it is time to win the political debate. The Melbourne Water Catchment Network (MWCN) was formed to

achieve a political resolution. In late 2007, the MWCN began lobbying the 30 Melbourne metro councils that represent Melbourne residents who depend on water from catchments being logged. In less than 12 months, half of these councils have passed resolutions calling on the state government to ban logging in Melbourne catchments, and others are expected to support the push this year.

The MWCN is using a strategy similar to that used by the Otway Ranges Environment Network, which succeeded in getting logging banned in the Geelong water supply catchments in 2002.

About 66 out of 88 Victorian MPs have constituents who depend on water from Melbourne catchments. The Victorian Labor government is under pressure from Australian Paper, the manufacturer of the popular Reflex paper brand, to ignore Melbourne councils and the community. Under the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996, Australian Paper can source woodchips from the Melbourne catchments until the year 2030. Over 70% of the trees cut down in the catchments are pulped by Australian Paper.

More information: Melbourne Water Catchment Network <<http://melbournecatchments.org>>.

Gunns 20 Defendants Need Your Support!

Adam Beeson



December 13 was the fourth anniversary of the commencement of the Gunns 20 case. The following day it was four years since Gunns announced its controversial pulp mill project.

Since the Gunns 20 case began it has occupied over 25 days of court time, involved 50 or more lawyers, probably cost the Victorian taxpayer over \$100,000 and probably cost Gunns over \$2 million in legal fees.

There are now nine people and two groups left from the original case. Dr Frank Nicklason (one of the original Gunns 20) is now being sued separately over remarks he allegedly made in relation to health risks associated with Gunns' woodchip piles.

On December 10, Gunns was ordered to pay \$91,000 towards Senator Bob Brown, Peg Putt and Helen Gee's

legal costs. This results from Gunns dropping them from the case in April 2007.

The total costs Gunns have been ordered to pay now exceeds \$600,000. This represents only part of the legal fees and other costs incurred by the defendants.

The amount Gunns has been ordered to pay contrasts with its claim for compensation which lists claims totalling \$115,503.48 as well as a further \$225,000 for unspecified "trouble and inconvenience".

On November 7, Gunns lost its appeal against the Supreme Court decision to deny it access to more Wilderness Society documents. In his judgment, Justice Kaye said that what Gunns was seeking had "the hallmarks of a fishing expedition". The discovery process continues.

On November 14, the court ordered the parties to engage in mediation, a normal part of the litigation process. The court ordered the mediation take place before 27 February 2008 followed by a Directions hearing on 6 March 2008.

The defendants are Dr Frank Nicklason, Alexander Marr, Geoff Law, Leanne Minshull, Heidi Douglas, The Wilderness Society, Adam Burling, Louise Morris, Lu Geraghty, Brian Dimmick, Huon Valley Environment Centre, Ben Morrow and Neal Funnell.

Four years on, 12 defendants remain entangled in this long-running court case, which has yet to reach trial.

You can keep up to date with the case, sign up for updates and donate at <www.gunns20.org>.

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Victorian Red Gum Forests

An Historic Victory

Five days after Christmas, I joined Aboriginal representatives and campaigners from the Victorian National Parks Association and the Wilderness Society outside the Victorian Premier's Media Centre. Over the past ten years we had called for every hectare of Victoria's Crown Land red gum forests to be protected and on December 30, the Victorian government announced that 90% of it would be protected - 91,000 hectares of new red gum conservation reserves. We had insisted on Aboriginal joint management, and in a state first, this too was part of the announcement. Brumby and his environment minister Gavin Jennings announced a massive victory for environmental justice.

Moments like this are rare, and until now, outside my experience. There was an eerie stillness, an unreality almost. We shook hands and politely chatted with advisers dragged in from holidays. We saw Brumby and Jennings only on the screen, creating this historic moment seemingly in a vacuum. Not even the adrenaline of speaking to camera pierced the balloon in which I was suspended. It was only a month later, floating on my back in the Barmah Lake beneath a sky flanked by red gums that the enormity of it all rushed over me.

There is much work to do, ensuring the announcement is faithfully transcribed into legislation and then well implemented. We also need to ensure our successes are built upon – both by seeking what we missed out on this time around, and perhaps most importantly, by scouring the campaign history for lessons that can be incorporated into our movement, making it stronger, more effective and more socially just.

Red gum forests lie mostly within the Riverina Bioregion which straddles the NSW-Victorian border. Largely due to the relatively small economic scale of the red gum logging industry, the Riverina never benefitted from the comprehensive land use assessments and conservation outcomes that resulted elsewhere from the 1990s Regional Forest Agreement process. This, despite the severe ecological degradation caused by the industry

on 266,000 hectares of State Forests (plus a further 250,000 ha of Western Lands Leases and an unknown but significant area of private land in NSW). In 2002, the Victorian red gum campaign was successful in obtaining a commitment from the then Bracks-led Labor government to conduct a regional assessment. This assessment would cover the two-fifths of red gum state forest area on the southern side of the border, and set in train the events that led to Brumby's December 30 announcement. The NSW government continues to obfuscate and delay dealing with the problem.

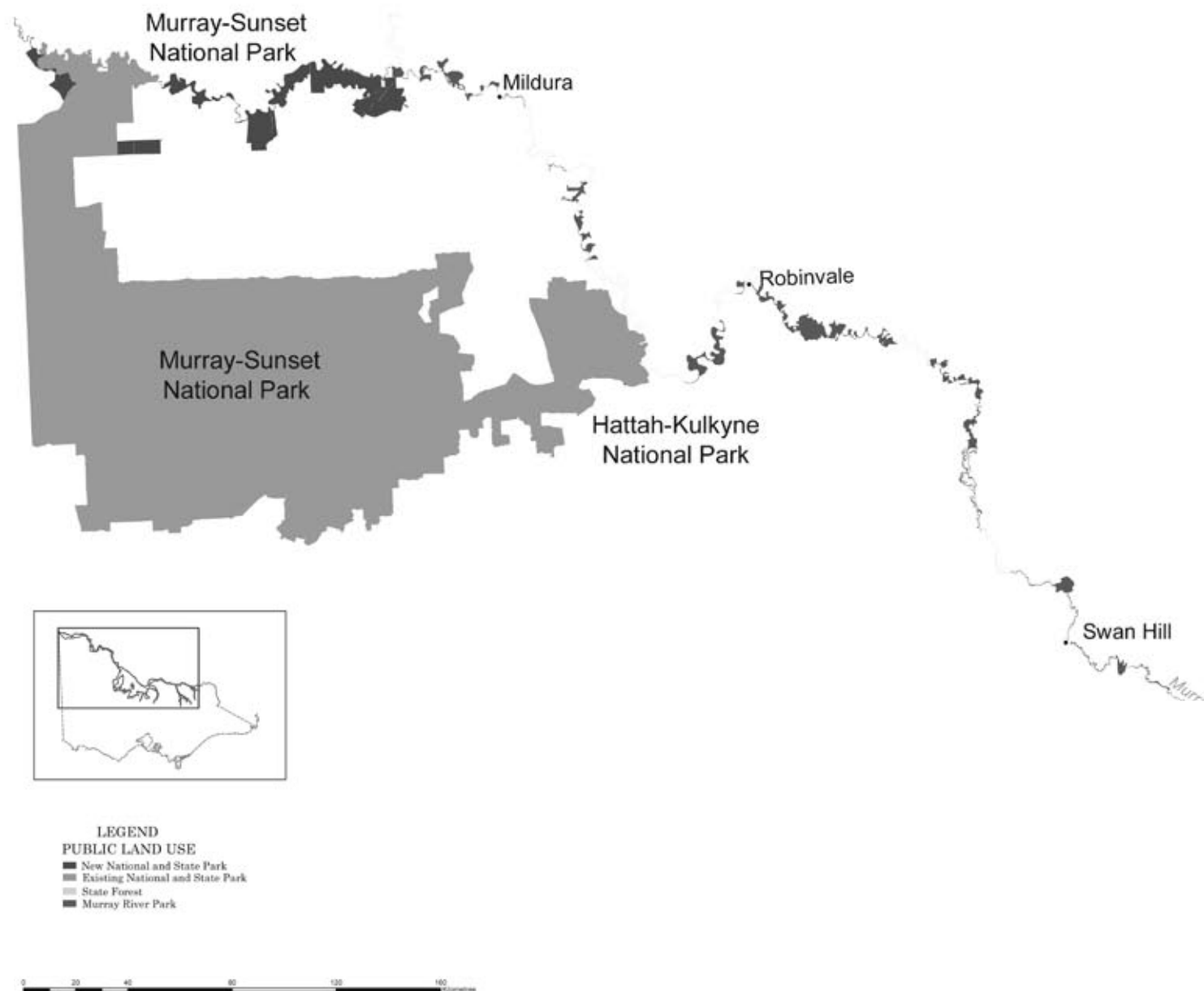
For Friends of the Earth, the most exciting aspect of the Victorian announcement was the commitment to co-manage significant areas with the Yorta Yorta and Wadi Wadi peoples. Making a tangible contribution to land justice was the original motivation for many of our red gum campaign team, the Barmah-Millewa Collective, and has remained a core objective throughout our ten year history. Along with the Yorta Yorta people, FoE led the charge to ensure the terms of reference for the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Red Gum Investigation included an assessment of joint management options.

The following pages assess what we have achieved in Victoria and are still to achieve in New South Wales, by reflecting on the origins of our historic green-black collaboration and describing the exciting future we have planned for it.

Jonathan La Nauze is FoE Melbourne's Red Gum Campaign Coordinator.

Wedge-tailed eagles nest in a river red gum. Barmah Forest.
Photo: Jonathan La Nauze

Victorian Red Gum Forests: Goals and Results of the Barmah-Millewa Campaign



Goal: Joint management legislation.

New legislation or amendments to the National Parks Act to allow for Aboriginal management of national parks. At a minimum, the legislation needs to allow for the 'handback-leaseback' model, in which land is handed back to the Traditional Owners, who subsequently lease it to the government to be managed as a National Park. In exchange, they receive rent payments and majority control of the park via a Board of Management, as well as a range of employment and training initiatives in park management.

Results: The National Parks Act will be amended to allow for both co-management and joint management options in all Victorian national parks. Joint management refers to the handback-leaseback model. Co-management is effectively joint management without the land handback.

Goal: Joint management of specific parks covering the Nyah, Barmah and Gunbower forests.

(Environment groups and the Barapa Barapa people only joined forces late in the campaign, agreeing in March 2008 to fight for a jointly managed Gunbower National Park. The Wamba Wamba and Yorta Yorta Nations also have an interest in Gunbower.)

Results: Immediate negotiation of co-management agreements with the Yorta Yorta over a new Barmah National Park and the Wadi Wadi over a new Nyah-Vinifera Park. We will campaign to upgrade this commitment to full joint management. A range of other valuable measures will also be put in place to improve Aboriginal rights to natural resources, land and participation in the management of other forests such as Gunbower. These including advisory committees, capacity building initiatives and the protection of rights to hunt, gather and conduct cultural practice.

Goal: New conservation reserves.

Due to the highly depleted nature of the river red gum system, we believe all remnants must be protected in permanent conservation reserves, provided Traditional Owner rights are preserved in these areas. The nationally agreed reserve criteria set a target of 15% of the pre-1750 distribution of each forest type to be protected in permanent reserves. Due to high levels of historic clearing in Victoria, protecting all publicly owned red gum forests would only just reach this 15% target.

Results: Red gum in permanent reserves increases from 69,640ha to 161,000ha, bringing the reservation status for Victorian red gum forests to 14 % of their pre-European extent. The announcement includes four new national parks (Barmah, Gunbower, Lower Goulburn and Warby Range-Ovens River) as well as numerous smaller reserves and significant national park expansions. Additionally, most of the remaining River Murray corridor outside of the reserve system will become a 37,000 ha "Murray River Park," managed under the Crown Lands (Reserves) Act. This classification protects

it from logging and other intensive industries but places fewer restrictions on recreation than in a conservation reserve. The big loser in the announcement is the Gunbower Forest, nearly two-thirds of which will remain State Forest. FoE remains committed to the complete protection of Gunbower and the neighbouring Guttrum and Benwell forests.

Goal: Bans on stock grazing and logging.

Cattle grazing and logging are the two biggest land use threats to Victoria's red gum forests. Although it is "selective" and allows for "regeneration," logging strips the forest of mature hollow-bearing red gums which provide habitat and feed to native fauna. Red gum forests support the highest number of hollow-dwelling bird species of all Victorian forest types, as well as significant numbers of hollow-dependant reptile and mammal species. Cattle compete with threatened species such as the Superb Parrot for food, destroy understorey vegetation and cause extensive erosion and pugging, particularly in sensitive wetland areas of the forest.

Results: Logging will be permanently banned in 90% of the areas in which it is currently allowed. Total State Forest (managed primarily for timber harvesting) will be reduced from 106,910 ha to 11,683 ha. Stock grazing will

be completely banned in all publicly owned Victorian red gum forests.

Goals: Restoration of natural flooding regimes.

Red gum ecosystems depend on regular flooding for their survival. Several of the larger forests such as Barmah and Gunbower are listed as wetlands of international significance under the Ramsar Convention. Every year millions of waterbirds from around the world descend on these forest-wetlands to breed. Floods have become increasingly rare and, when they do occur, are generally shorter and less extensive due to over-extraction of water from the Murray-Darling Basin, primarily for irrigation. Scientists estimate at least 4,000 billion litres need to be returned to the river annually to ensure the survival of red gum forests and other riverine ecosystems. So far only 500 billion litres has been committed by the state and commonwealth governments.

Results: No additional environmental water delivered through this announcement. Whilst healthy rivers and healthy red gum forests are inextricably linked, governments have historically dealt with forest conservation and environmental flows separately. We now look forward to putting more energy into the community alliances pushing for greater environmental flows and Aboriginal water rights in the Murray-Darling.





FoE banner - World Environment Day Rally for Victoria's Forests 2006
Photo: Josie Lee

The History of the Barmah-Millewa Campaign

Jonathan La Nauze

Given the historic outcomes of the Barmah-Millewa campaign, it is worth briefly examining how such an effective green-black alliance emerged in south-eastern Australia

Since European invasion, the Yorta Yorta people have maintained an unbroken campaign for land rights and the health of their country, including at least 18 separate formal claims for land and compensation. The earliest of these was in 1860, when they demanded compensation for destruction of their fisheries by paddle-steamers. From this petition, lodged with the Victorian colonial authorities, through to their most recent attempt through the gravely flawed native title system, the Yorta Yorta fight for land justice has also been a struggle for environmental justice. It should be of no surprise then that FoE – whose bedrock principle is environmental justice – was one of the organisations to which the Yorta Yorta turned for support during their ultimately rejected campaign for native title. But we were not the only group, and not the first.

When I spoke recently with Peter Barker, one of the first members of the FoE Barmah-Millewa Collective (BMC), he recalled “the readiness of the Yorta Yorta, more than any other Traditional Owner group, to work with environmentalists in a meaningful way.” Key Yorta Yorta people, particularly Monica Morgan, drove the establishment of a strategic alliance between the Yorta Yorta and environment groups in order to achieve both land justice and environmental protection of their country.

The Yorta Yorta had long had a focus on Barmah-Millewa as the ‘heartland.’ Monica says: “So if you want to protect your forest, you bring in the people who’s job that is supposed to be. But then of course that required a whole cross-cultural learning.”

In the mid 1990s, when the newly formed Goulburn Valley Environment Group (GVEG) began “making noises” about Barmah, the Yorta Yorta were both

concerned not to have been consulted, and keen to pursue a potential local ally. Monica contacted GVEG member Doug Robinson and, she says, immediately found common ground. Through participation in international fora such as the Ramsar Convention, the Yorta Yorta also began to develop relationships with larger Australian NGOs such as FoE, the Wilderness Society, and World Wide Fund for Nature. The Australian Conservation Foundation had also begun to develop a relationship with the Yorta Yorta through their work to protect the Murray River. There were challenges, however. “I was surprised by the lack of awareness of Aboriginal rights. Many of these groups seemed to operate entirely outside concepts of traditional owner culture and rights,” Monica said. FoE, thankfully, wasn’t one of them.

Discussions of a coordinated campaign to protect Barmah-Millewa began in earnest in 1998 when the Yorta Yorta occupied the Dharnya Centre in Barmah Forest as a protest against the Kennett and Howard governments’ racist “10 point plan” to water down native title legislation. Many traditional owners and supporters such as FoE attended the occupation, and new alliances and campaigns were established.

Two in particular shaped the future of FoE’s – yet to be established – Barmah-Millewa Collective. Discussions between Traditional Owners led to the formation of Murray & Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), the federation that has become a driving force in the fight to protect the cultural and ecological integrity of the Murray-Darling system. And, FoE received a formal request from Yorta Yorta elders to join them in a campaign to protect Barmah-Millewa and re-establish their rights to manage the forest.

Independently of these happenings, other conservation groups – notably the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) – had long been interested in establishing a

system of red gum protected areas. Victorian red gum forests were almost entirely unprotected, having missed out on even the minimal protection outcomes of a regional forest agreement. The only significant area, Barmah State Park, was a park in name only, as grazing and logging were allowed under an upper house deal secured by the National Party. The VNPA always refused to acknowledge it as a protected area.

Following the Dharnya occupation, the Yorta Yorta initiated dialogue with FoE, GVEG and the VNPA, seeking a formal campaign protocol detailing shared objectives and how the groups would work together. These discussions were challenging for some conservationists, as they were asked to commit equally to achieving majority management control and employment opportunities for the Yorta Yorta as to conservation goals such as removing logging and grazing. They felt it was unstrategic or even counter to their organisational mission to step outside the scope of pure nature conservation. To do so, it was argued, would risked damaging their credibility as it required engagement in what was seen as areas of social policy in which they had no expertise. For the Yorta Yorta, whose rights and country were daily trampled upon, this was a false separation, as social outcomes were intrinsically a consequence of environmental protection.

According to Monica, “the Elders were concerned about recovery and rejuvenation and protecting Barmah for future generations.” Issues of management control stemmed logically from that concern. Ultimately, all four groups were able to commit to the protection of the biodiversity and cultural integrity of Barmah-Millewa through joint management of a Barmah-Millewa Conservation Reserve. The Barmah-Millewa Campaign was born.

The Nyah-Vinifera Campaign

Independently, a similar collaboration had begun downstream at Nyah-Vinifera, a 1,000 ha red gum forest on Wadi Wadi country west of Swan Hill. In late 1996, a public meeting was called by local field naturalist Marg Banks to discuss a logging coupe in Nyah that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment had scheduled for the following year. Logging had been absent from Nyah for at least 20 years and the threat of its return was abhorrent to local Wadi Wadi and environmentalists. “The response was huge – about fifty people turned up, and the result was the establishment of Friends of Nyah-Vinifera (FoNV),” founding member Jacquie Kelly told me.

“Wadi Wadi people including Doug Nicholls and others had been active for years trying to protect the forest so of course they were there,” said Jacquie. “The Wadi Wadi were key to the formation of our group and it was this coming together that gave us all strength.

I asked Doug why he and other Wadi Wadi through their lot in with local environmentalists. “Aside from them, no one was giving a stuff about our sites,” Doug told me. “That’s my grandparents and great grandparents buried out there. They’re not just sites, these are people, and in my law they’re still living.”

The group that was formed dedicated themselves to achieving community management of the forest, including Wadi Wadi and other local interests. “Wadi Wadi were just one component of the community. The Friends started as a collaboration of different cultures,” Doug said. “Everyone tries to separate us off and do deals. Wadi Wadi are part of the community and we won’t be split off.”

In 1997, in a remarkable parallel to the development of the Barmah-Millewa Campaign protocols, FoNV detailed

Intermediate Egret in breeding plumage, Hut Lake, Barmah
Photo: Sandy Scheltima copyright Australian Ecosystems



their objectives in a Community-Based Management Statement for the Nyah-Vinifera Forest. As well as dealing with key management issues such as logging, grazing, recreational access and cultural heritage protection, the statement emphasised the principle of community management: “We believe that the recognition of Native Title will be of real value to the ongoing health of the Nyah-Vinifera Forest and the River Murray as a whole. Yet whatever is achieved regarding Native Title we support the establishment of a system of community management that will include appointees from the local community having links with Koorie, Environmental and Passive Recreational Groups-.”

The fronts merge: the Red Gum Campaign

The beginning of the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) Red Gum Investigation in 2005 created the opportunity and the imperative for FoE and other groups to work on red gum conservation at a more systemic level. The National Parks Associations on both sides of the border (VNPA and NPA) had already begun this work with the launch of the cross-border Red Gum Icons Project the year before.

Although we had successfully campaigned for VEAC to investigate Aboriginal joint management options, FoE had yet to establish formal relationships with the other Traditional Owners along the Murray. FoE saw this as a priority and hence a relationship was formed with MLDRIN who were also keen to collaborate. After signing an historic Cooperation Agreement in February 2007, MLDRIN, FoE, The Wilderness Society and NPA began a comprehensive consultation and negotiation over red gum forests with individual Traditional Owner Nations. This process, and the resulting Murray Country Project, are explored in this issue of Chain Reaction by long-term Barmah-Millewa Campaign member and now Murray Country Project coordinator, Indra Narayan.

Successful green-black campaigns are a long time in the development, however, and within the rigid timeframe of the VEAC investigation, it proved impossible to replicate the Yorta Yorta and Wadi Wadi alliances which had developed over many years. Strong relationships have developed with the Barapa Barapa, Mutti Mutti and Wamba Wamba people, and tentative bridges have been built with the Latji Latji and Wiradjuri – however agreed positions on conservation proposals mostly arrived too late to influence the VEAC recommendations. It is telling that out of the huge VEAC investigation area, Barmah and Nyah-Vinifera ended up with the strongest outcomes for both conservation and justice for Aboriginal people.

The campaign does not end with the recent announcement, and FoE remains committed to working in solidarity with the Traditional Owners of the Murray-

Darling to protect country and achieve land justice. On the Victorian side of the border, this includes a jointly managed National Park covering the Gunbower Forest. The NSW government has been slow to act, which has the singular advantage that if and when it does conduct a regional assessment, green-black relationships will be more widespread than they were in Victoria. Through the Murray Country Project, FoE, NPA and the Wilderness Society have been developing solid relationships and agreed proposals with Traditional Owners and we look forward to making a renewed effort in support of the NSW red gum campaign.

Photo: Brian Bainbridge



Campaign timeline

1982 – 1985	Victoria's Land Conservation Council conducts a Murray Valley Area Investigation. The National Party waters down the already limited conservation proposals in the upper house to the extent that logging and grazing is permitted in the new Barmah State Park. The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) refuse to recognise the new park.
1990	Goulburn Valley Environment Group (GVEG) formed.
1994	Yorta Yorta request meeting with GVEG and the beginnings of an alliance emerge.
1996	Friends of Nyah Vinifera Forest (FoNV) formed including membership of key Wadi Wadi individuals.
1997	FoNV write the 'Community-Based Management Statement for the Nyah-Vinifera Forest'.
1998	Yorta Yorta occupy the Dharnya Centre. Environmental activists and Traditional Owners travel from the Friends of the Earth Indigenous Solidarity Conference to support them.
2000	Yorta Yorta, FoE and GVEG agree on Barmah-Millewa campaign protocol.
2002	<p>FoE and Yorta Yorta hold a press conference at the Dharnya Centre to launch the Barmah-Millewa campaign.</p> <p>FoE and Yorta Yorta organise the Barmah-Millewa Summit at the Dharnya Centre. Peak environment and social justice organisations endorse campaign for joint management of Barmah-Millewa.</p> <p>Bracks Labor government makes election promise to conduct an investigation into establishing new red gum national parks.</p> <p>VNPA reaches agreement with the Yorta Yorta on shared campaign objectives.</p>
2005	<p>Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) River Red Gum Investigation commences. After a concerted campaign, the terms of reference include consideration of Aboriginal joint management models – a Victorian first.</p> <p>Protected habitat logged in the Barmah Forest. Sustained protest by FoE, VNPA and Yorta Yorta leads to an external investigation by the Environment Protection Authority. It is found that the Department of Sustainability and Environment sent logging contractors into a protected area for the nationally threatened Superb Parrot.</p>
2006	Red gum forests clear-felled on the Murray River including one 200 m by 120 m, only metres from the banks of the Murray near Tooleybuc, in NSW.
2007	<p>Seven environment groups sign a Cooperation Agreement with MLDRIN, forming an alliance for the protection of the ecological and cultural integrity of the Murray and Lower Darling Rivers systems.</p> <p>NPA NSW take Forests NSW to court but logging continues in threatened species habitats. A community blockade ensues in Millewa forest, halting logging for five days. The blockade ends when Forests NSW and NPA reach an out-of-court settlement under which restrictions are put on logging until the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.</p> <p>Environment groups begin negotiations over red gum forests with Traditional Owners in the Murray-Darling.</p>
2008	<p>Victorian Environment Assessment Council recommend 103,600 ha of new and expanded conservation reserves to protect red gum forests, as well as co-management of Nyah-Vinifera and Barmah.</p> <p>Victorian government accepts most of the recommendations, committing to a massive 91,000 ha increase in the red gum reserve system, and co-management of Nyah-Vinifera and Barmah forests.</p>



River Red Gum Forests: The Situation in NSW

Blockade in the Moira red gum forest NSW, September 2007

Georgina Woods

The NSW Labor government was once a conservation trailblazer. During the 1990s, forest management in eastern NSW was totally overhauled and in subsequent years millions of hectares of national parks were created as we inched our way towards National Forest Policy targets for ecosystem protection in the escarpment and coastal forests and into the north-west.

One major forest district was left behind as this reform process petered out, leaving undetermined the fate of the river red gum forests that cluster around the major floodplains and waterways of the Riverina bioregion – the Murray, the Lachlan, and the Murrumbidgee.

Unlike all the other major NSW forestry districts, the river red gums have never been subject to a regional assessment process, and do not enjoy the benefits of an Integrated Forestry Operations Approval. This neglect has driven both the NSW red gums ecosystems and the industry that exploits them into the ground. Hollow-bearing and mature trees are in decline, iconic species that once thrived there are vanishing. The combined impact

of the drought, over-allocated rivers and an unsustainable and destructive logging regime is killing the river red gum forests.

The red gum timber industry crosses the state boundary, just like the ecosystems themselves and the Aboriginal nations that have continuously occupied them for millennia. Victorian-based mills process trees cut in NSW. Even before the Victorian government's outstanding decision, NSW forests provided five times the volume of timber compared to Victoria, from only 1.5 times the forest area. Victoria's recent commitment to remove 90% of its red gum state forests from production means that NSW forests will be under even more pressure to supply timber mill quotas. The spotlight has now fallen squarely on the NSW government to assess and protect the NSW red gum forests.

The NSW government is heading into the second half of this term with a serious environmental deficit. Promised greenhouse reduction initiatives have failed to materialise, planning laws still allow widespread habitat

loss, and the marine park creation process has stalled. No major new environmental initiatives have emerged. The creation of large new national parks in red gum country would indicate that the government has not abandoned the natural world and is serious about addressing major conservation shortfalls.

The National Parks Association of NSW and other environment groups are calling for the creation of large new national parks in the public forests of the river red gums, under joint management with Aboriginal Nations where that is sought. The area of forest protected will have to be substantial to meet basic conservation targets, and the volume of timber extracted from the forests dramatically reduced.

The NSW red gums harbour areas of national environmental significance including over 80,000 ha of Ramsar-listed wetlands and habitat for the nationally threatened Superb Parrot. Logging activity has long been recognised as having a significant impact on the environment – particularly for hollow-dependent species like the Superb Parrot – yet the logging has never been granted approval and has never even been assessed under the federal Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act. Last year, the National Parks Association of NSW submitted a major report to the federal government alleging that forestry activities undertaken by Forests NSW are illegal under the Act and calling for the environment minister Peter Garrett to halt logging until a proper assessment and approval process is complete, national parks declared, threatened species and wetlands properly protected and logging quotas reduced.

The needless delay of the NSW government in initiating a process to assess the forests and protect them in large new national parks has already cost the red gums dearly. A process must begin now that assesses the ecological significance of the forests, including their role as climate refuges in the only vegetated east-west corridor in south-west NSW. That process must engage Traditional Owner nations on an informed consent basis so that the aspirations of Aboriginal people, who have never ceded sovereignty over their country, can form part of the forest reform process.

Georgina Woods is a Biodiversity Protection Officer with the National Parks Association of NSW.

Peron's Tree Frog - *Litoria peroni* group at Reedy Lagoon Gunbower Island
Photo: Damien Cook



The Murray Country Project

Indira Narayan

A really exciting collaboration is happening in the southern Murray Darling Basin - a coming together of Traditional Owners and environment groups, determined to make significant sustainable changes to the way we live in and use this region. It is a multifaceted plan concerning the myriad of problems faced in the river country. The alliance is a recognition of the self-determination rights of Traditional Owners and the cultural knowledge that they have regarding their country, the expertise of environment NGOs, and an acknowledgement that working together is integral to a sustainable future.

We often hear about blackfellas working on country in the top end and the centre, but until recently it was a concept hardly considered by non-indigenous groups in the south-east of Australia. Blackfellas in the south-east have always looked after or sorrowed over their country, and have never stopped calling for the protection of country. Having survived measles and being locked into missions, indigenous nations of the Murray Darling continue the strong and proud carriage of their old people. They're demanding recognition of their rights to control resources on their country in order to satisfy their traditional cultural responsibilities as well as their contemporary socio-economic needs. This stoicism in the face of adversity is beginning to pay off for Traditional Owners, with a slow transition in attitude and behaviour ethics amongst greenies and other institutions.

Colonialism in the south-east has profoundly affected Traditional Owners and their country, with Victoria and southern NSW being the most heavily urbanised, farmed and industrialised part of Australia. This scenario has damned Traditional Owners. It's why Traditional Owners haven't enjoyed joint management rights in Victoria's parks, where this has been an option in some other states and territories for years. Theft of Aboriginal people's land and water has left only 0.02% of tenure in Aboriginal hands within the Basin. Intensive privatisation of lands, farming, water use, logging and other extractive activities have meant that we're all left scrambling to control activities on remaining 'Crown Lands'. Unfortunately that has seen distrust build up between Aboriginal communities and green groups.

Aboriginal people are marginalised by racist attitudes and prejudices, and at the same time in this corner of the country, are combatting both naïve and purposeful accusations of not being black enough to enjoy real rights over country. This Daisy Bates mentality of the "dying out of the Aborigine" permeates the green movement. For too long, with some exceptions, environmental NGOs, along

with other institutions and communities, have disregarded Traditional Owners rights, and have presumptively worked on conservation issues and excluded the participation of blackfellas in the south-east.

Greenies demand a voice at the negotiating table and in the media over Crown lands. Though our voices are relatively loud, more often than not we have not made room for Traditional Owners to sit alongside us to have their voices heard also. As an empowered part of the general community (our ranks are over-populated by middle class, highly educated white people), our alliance building with blackfellas has been too slow. There has been obstinate racism that is coddled in our ranks. Cries that 'our board or our membership will not allow us to recognise sovereignty of Traditional Owners' are not uncommon. This has translated into a lack of solidarity with Traditional Owners to shuffle the seats to allow them to join us at the negotiating table or at the media interview.

Having said all that, over the past decade there has been a significant shift in attitude in certain parts of the community, including the green movement. Environmental activists are slowly undergoing a forced decolonisation of our attitudes to our natural landscapes and our understanding of Aboriginal people's place in country. But this natural alliance needs to be nurtured through a period of relationship building and understanding the complex roles that we play, and places we occupy in both the greenie and blackfella worlds. It needs to be cemented with a show of solidarity that greenies are not in it just at the times that suit us but for the long haul.

Unfortunately, not all environmental NGOs are at the table yet and those that have begun the journey are still challenged by racist, colonial policies. It can be an unsettling process - giving up power, especially for environmental NGOs, who rarely have the clout that corporate entities or governments have. Though it is often cash strapped, the environment movement is empowered with lots of university education, access to philanthropy, communication and media skills. It is populated by those that have chosen to be there rather than those that are born into multi-generational poverty and displacement.

The Murray Country Project, while focused on the nuts and bolts of protecting remaining red gums and water left in the river country, is dealing with these issues of power and control. The Cooperation Agreement between nine Traditional Owner Nations and seven environmental NGOs is being studied with interest by signatories as well

as groups around the country. Hopefully this Alliance and Project contributes to sustainable pathways - and not just in this part of the country.

The Cooperation Agreement

In February 2007, seven environment groups with a working interest in the Murray Darling Basin signed a historic Cooperative Agreement with the confederated members of the Murray and Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN). This Agreement recognises the self-determination rights of Traditional Owners, and a promise to work together towards a shared vision of healthy country and healthy people. It means changing past practices where environment groups waltz in and start demanding the establishment of parks, or for that matter that all logging is stopped. It recognises that Traditional Owners are often at the coalface of environmental problems and solutions. The agreed process includes NGO's talking with local Traditional Owners about priorities and strategies. Participatory discussions are organised to ensure that local Traditional Owners are included in decision-making and that there is adequate time and space for effective and principled negotiation - this process is known as free, prior and informed consent.

The aims of the Cooperative Agreement include working together towards:

- healthy country, where Traditional Owners can care for country according to their traditions and customs;
- healthy rivers and streams flowing with natural cycles and cultural flows;
- the restoration of important cultural and ecological connections, providing a secure future for traditional culture, native flora and fauna; and
- a prosperous economy reliant on environmentally sensitive industries that conserve natural and cultural values.

The Murray Country Project: People, Land and Water

A few months after the agreement was reached, three NGOs and MLDRIN birthed the Murray Country Project (MCP) in order to negotiate conservation goals regarding red gums in northern Victoria and southern NSW. This was particularly urgent in light of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's investigation into the management of red gum ecosystems on Victorian public lands. The flogging of red gum forests in NSW also necessitated quick action.

These red gum discussions included talking about land and water tenure, and negotiating priority areas for campaigns, investigating what skills and knowledge in whitefella science Traditional Owners needed and what traditional knowledge of water flows and biodiversity Traditional Owners could share with greenies and others. In practical terms this meant discussing for example whether we campaign for a jointly managed National Park or an Indigenous Protected Area. MCP partners have also identified priority areas for future collaboration.

Agreements have been made between the three NGOs and three of the nations, with a further two pending, covering the majority of the red gum areas in question. When including NGO agreements with Yorta Yorta, we have unified our actions to see the creation of significant new jointly managed national parks and Indigenous Protected Areas, as well as a range of complementary socio-economic programs.

Since the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's recommendations have been accepted by the government, we are continuing our joint work to develop effective and empowering joint management models.

Signatories to the 2007 Cooperation Agreement

(*Active Murray Country Project partners to date)

Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN)

Wiradjuri*
Yorta Yorta
Taungurung
Barapa Barapa*
Wamba Wamba*
Mutti Mutti*
Wadi Wadi*
Werigaia
Ngarrindjeri

NGOs

Australian Conservation Foundation
Environment Victoria
Friends of the Earth*
National Parks Association of NSW*
Nature Conservation Council of NSW
Victorian National Parks Association; and
The Wilderness Society, Victoria*, Sydney*, SA.

Strategies for the future

The project partners want to see the victories south of the Murray replicated in NSW. This includes looking at improving joint management arrangements that are currently available in NSW, so that they better address Traditional Owner participation in decision-making and participation in natural resource management.

We are also workshopping with various environment and legal/human rights NGOs about Aboriginal rights over water. This work hopes to co-mingle more effectively a rights agenda in water campaigns, and incorporate MLDRIN's calls for cultural water allocations. Water campaigners have been able to listen to what Traditional Owners are saying about cultural water and jigsawing it into place with environmental watering campaigns.

This year we look forward to developing a strategy for the next five years of work of advocacy and public education. The strategy will include protocols for engagement and goals for a myriad of campaigns like cultural water flows, organising training opportunities for Traditional Owners in Natural Resource Management methodologies, and incorporating traditional cultural knowledge into management plans for red gum wetlands and other ecosystems, monitoring significant species and biodiversity in environments affected by human use and climate change, planning and implementing adaptation strategies for climate change, general capacity building in the small and regional areas that are the homes for Traditional Owners and other rural communities, and land and water acquisition by Traditional Owners.

Indira Narayan is the coordinator of the Murray Country Project and a Barmah-Millewa Campaign member.

www.saveredgum.org

World Environment Day Rally for Victoria's Forests.
Photo: Josie Lee

www.saveredgum.org

The Battle to Save Brown Mountain

Lauren Caulfield

The struggle to protect East Gippsland's ancient forests has escalated, with the logging of old growth forest and threatened species habitat at Brown Mountain. Blockades to halt logging this summer have resulted in 15 arrests, and recent wildlife surveys have revealed the presence of threatened species requiring protection under state law, securing the area a temporary reprieve.

Brown Mountain provides vital habitat for threatened species. Recent surveys by conservationists and scientists working with Environment East Gippsland revealed the presence of Yellow-Bellied Gliders and a Sooty Owl, together with *Euastacus Diversus*, the critically endangered Orbost Spiny Crayfish - a freshwater crustacean so vulnerable it has its own species Action Statement under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.

At the time of writing, the presence of the crayfish, together with mounting community, legal and political pressure, has secured a two-week moratorium on logging at Brown Mountain while its future is decided by the Victorian government.

In a press conference held in Melbourne, Australian Greens leader Bob Brown said it was outrageous that it was left to volunteer conservationists and scientists working with environment groups to survey the area for threatened species. "The Department of Sustainability and Environment must be hanging its head with shame ... these are fabulous Victorian wildlife and the Brumby Government is aiding and abetting their onrush towards extinction," he said.

Under this Action Statement, the species is entitled to Special Protection Zone (SPZ) measures, including Linear Reserves consisting of an undisturbed buffer of approximately 100m on each bank of the stream for one kilometre upstream and downstream of the detection site. Under the Statement, construction of new roads must also be avoided within the Linear Reserve, and any regeneration burning in the vicinity strictly controlled and managed to ensure that habitat reserves are not burnt.

State-owned commercial forestry agency Vicforests is disputing the presence of the species, with regional manager, Barry Vaughan, stating that the crayfish specimen presented by conservationists was not the endangered Orbost spiny crayfish, but the relatively common Bidawal spiny crayfish. But this has been dismissed by scientists and environment groups as a bid to keep the area open for logging. "There must be



Photo by Jill Redwood.

a systematic survey undertaken for *Euastacus Diversus* in Brown Mountain, and buffer zones allocated 1km in either direction, as per the Action Statement, to protect the species," said Australian freshwater crayfish team member, Jo Edwards.

The close of the moratorium period will see a government decision on the implementation of measures to protect the crayfish, and the future of Brown Mountain.

Brown Mountain is an area of old growth forest at the headwaters of the Bonang River, through which the community-developed 'Valley of the Giants' walking track wends its way. Three highly contentious logging coupes were scheduled in the area, with one already logged and a further two immediately pending. This flies in the face of the government's 2006 election forest policy, which states, "The benefits for tourism, and market access opportunities for the timber industry from protecting the remaining significant old growth timber stands, clearly outweigh the ongoing minimal returns from the harvesting of old growth forest."

The Brumby government has claimed that it will deliver a 5,000 ha link between the existing Snowy and Errinundra National Parks. Brown Mountain is the eastern end of this link, and a vital area for inclusion to secure the continuous corridor of protected forest.

At the 2006 state election, the Brumby government promised to protect 41,000 ha of significant old growth forest throughout East Gippsland. More than two years later, this promise is yet to be implemented, and the long term future of Brown Mountain, and East Gippsland's remaining old growth forest, hangs in the balance.

For further information, images and coming events in the campaign to protect Brown Mountain and Gippsland's old growth forests, visit Environment East Gippsland <www.eastgippsland.net.au>, <www.forestwatch.info> and the Goongerah Environment Centre <www.geco.org.au>.



Forest Stewardship Council - A Tool for Change

Herbie Haradine measuring a scar tree. Photo courtesy of Timbercorp.

Michael Spencer

All too frequently I find myself staring at wood products wondering about the origin of the wood. I know that in general, wood is a more natural, less energy-intensive product, but that deforestation and forest degradation are robbing the planet of biodiversity; of its ability to absorb and store carbon. Illegal logging is stealing from the poorest communities in the world.

Every day, people are faced with dilemmas about the products they want, or need, to buy.

FSC or Forest Stewardship Council is one form of reassurance you should know about. It is the only wood and paper product verification program that gives you a say in how it is run, and how it decides what products qualify for its logo. It provides organisations such as Friends of the Earth the same voice as industry associations and large companies. And it is your system for verifying wood products, as much as it is a system for industry, social, community and indigenous groups.

Environment groups, indigenous people's organisations and more responsible companies, after failure at the Rio Earth Summit in the early 1990s, and deciding they would take action themselves, first agreed on what responsible forest management meant. They then

developed the FSC Principles and Criteria for Responsible Forest Management, and a certification system based on endorsed standards for responsible forest management. A chain of custody and a labelling system was also set up so customers can be assured that they are supporting responsible forest management, when they buy wood and paper products.

Importantly, FSC was built around a governance system that provides for sub-groups of members whose main interest is in environmental, social and economic benefits of forests. 'Chambers' of interest work together to reach consensus, and no chamber can dominate decision-making.

The system very quickly proved to be more successful than its founders hoped! Products began appearing carrying the FSC logo and forest managers leapt at the opportunity to be verified as responsible operators – some wanting to do the right thing and be tested against a benchmark; some seeing a market opportunity.

The FSC Principles and Criteria have proven to be robust and are recognised as the global benchmark for forest management.

More than 100 million hectares of forest have been

certified to FSC standards in more than 70 countries, ranging from softwood forests in Europe through to tropical forests in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The economic benefits of forest certification are reflected in market access and in better prices, and provide an incentive for poorer communities to manage their forests sustainably.

There has been a very strong interest in forest certification here too, over the past three years. A national working group includes major environment groups (including FoE), and people with social interests in forests, as well as corporations. Companies participating in the FSC system – by obtaining our Chain of Custody certification – have grown from 10 in 2005, to 158 at the start of 2009.

Unfortunately, the area of certified forest has not matched the growth in participation from downstream customers for wood products. Plantation managers have been the main participants in the FSC system. More recently, groups of small forest owners have formed to seek FSC certification. And state forest agencies promote their own program, which lacks our strong involvement of stakeholders.

FSC Australia has struggled to raise the funds it needs to develop an FSC national forest management standard for Australia. So Australian forest managers have been certified to 'interim' standards, not subjected to an extensive development and stakeholder consultation process.

In Australia, FSC can point to a fairly solid level of achievement:

- The 16 forest management certificates that have been issued in Australia and New Zealand have resulted in more than 500 changes – of these, a substantial number affect endangered species or community relations.
- Strong competition from FSC has helped force the industry's own certification program to change rules that were failing to stop forests from being converted to plantations. And companies such as Gunns and Forestry Tasmania have said they will stop.
- Major retailers reviewed their procurement policies and now use FSC certification to verify the origin of products such as garden furniture.
- FSC has set up a process to review chemical use, by Australian forest management companies. At least one plantation manager has said that it has been able to reduce use of a hazardous chemical by more than 80%, setting a lead for others in the industry to follow.
- FSC has been able to engage substantial parts of the Australian forest and wood products industry in discussions with stakeholders, about responsible forest practices. More recently, this has extended to

major Japanese paper companies, who have sourced woodchips from Tasmania.

- With support from FoE, a program led by indigenous Australians has started which will see how FSC can engage best with traditional owners and ensure their views are reflected by us.

But the level of conflict in Australia over forest management has meant that the FSC system has also been tested over the past few years:

- Complaints against the certification of one plantation manager in Victoria attracted an audit of the auditor, by the FSC accreditation body, during the audit process itself. The accreditation body found there were problems with this audit and ordered compulsory corrective action.
- Environmental stakeholders expressed concern when one certified company began selling FSC-certified 'Mixed Sources' paper, even though the company sourced wood from Victorian State Forests, because of concern that wood from prohibited sources may have been getting through to FSC-labelled products. An FSC Australia team of experts provided guidelines to certification bodies and companies on management of such risks, and now all sources of wood in Australia are to be regarded as having an 'unspecified risk', as opposed to 'low risk', of endangering high conservation values. Companies seeking controlled wood in future will need to undertake stakeholder consultation and verify that they have processes in place to manage the risks (or find alternative sources).
- A number of environmental stakeholders continue to have concerns about elements of how controlled wood is being managed, and how FSC-accredited certification-bodies are doing their job. As a result, a series of policy motions were passed at the recent FSC International General Assembly that will tighten procedures and address these concerns. Australian environmentalists played a large part in drafting and winning support from economic and social chamber members for these changes.

Changes taking place demonstrate that despite tensions which are inevitable in achieving consensus between environmental, social and economic stakeholders, FSC is a successful, living and evolving system for promoting responsible forest management in Australia and around the world.

Michael Spencer is Chief Executive Officer of FSC Australia.

Problems with the Forest Stewardship Council

Anthony Amis

For the past 10 years, Friends of the Earth has been involved in monitoring plantation operations in Victoria, particularly in Gippsland. During this time several plantation companies have been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) including Hancock Victorian Plantations, Timbercorp and ITC.

The Hancock FSC certification in February 2004 was the first to occur in Australia. At that stage there was hope that the FSC would see a marked improvement in performance by Hancock and an opportunity to set aside contentious areas from logging. It was for this reason that Friends of the Earth (FoE) initially supported the certification, although as early as April 2000 FoE was expressing concerns that the FSC was planning to move into Australia before local communities had a proper chance to work out details for themselves.

Initially the FSC process did encourage improvement in Hancock's performance. A number of Corrective Action Requests (CARs) were drafted by the FSC certifier SmartWood and we were under the impression that if these CARs were not met the company could lose its FSC certificate. Hancock also agreed to a moratorium on logging contentious rainforest catchments and stopped its use of the herbicide simazine in hardwood plantations, as simazine was a prohibited substance under FSC.

Around 2006 however, things started going terribly wrong. Not only did we find that Hancock had misled and withheld information from FSC auditors, but we also found that SmartWood auditors were being overruled by senior SmartWood staff, rewording unmet CARs and thereby allowing Hancock to keep its certification whilst not meeting the CARs. The major reason behind Hancock's problems was the lack of scientific definition of rainforest within their Gippsland holdings, leading to gutting of key high conservation value forests. Hancock should have lost its FSC certificate in 2006 but did not.

Moreover, SmartWood, which had already invested time and money into Hancock certification, granted what is known as a Chain of Custody certification to Victoria's largest consumer of trees, the Maryvale Pulp Mill. Maryvale qualified for Chain of Custody certification because a portion of its log supplies were coming from FSC certified sources (Hancock). Maryvale could benefit from FSC for its marketing agenda whilst at the same time significantly increasing its supply of native forest pulplogs, which were not assessed by the FSC system. We felt sold out by SmartWood and an FSC system that promised much but delivered very little.

Due to the controversy, the FSC watchdog, Accreditation Services International (ASI), conducted an audit of SmartWood in early 2007 and concluded:

"ASI auditor detected that ... one of the major problems is that SmartWood issued CARs that do not adequately address the identified non compliances. Many of these CARs were extended and/or closed despite the lack of compliance instead of being upgraded, or other disciplinary measures be proposed against the certificate holder. Another major issue is that SmartWood issued a certificate to a company that did not demonstrate full compliance with FSC certification requirements thus encouraging a continuous improvement approach instead of a performance based certification. This seems to be the root-cause for many problems, including high visibility of the Hancock Victorian Plantations certificate. This is a major threat to the credibility of the SmartWood certification system and subsequently to FSC if not corrected."

Since the ASI audit of 2007, Hancock's performance has worsened, continuing to clearfall a rainforest reserve and about to embark on logging of sites of National Conservation Significance at College Creek – all whilst carrying the FSC label.

Problems with the Hancock certification are not confined to FSC operations in Australia. FSC Watch highlights similar problems (and worse) occurring in FSC operations around the world. Familiar themes are: failure of certifiers to comply with the FSC's rules by not publishing Public Summary reports in a timely manner; certification on the basis of 'hoped-for improvements' rather than performance; covering up failures to actually improve performance by continually re-issuing CARs; and slowness of the ASI in publishing the reports of its audits of certifiers where problems are identified.

Five years ago I was very supportive of FSC. Now I am totally disillusioned with a system that cannot provide independent forest monitoring because the certifying bodies are paid for by the companies that they are auditing, allowing the timber industry too much influence in what the certifying bodies write and report on.

More information:

* FSC Watch <www.fsc-watch.org>

* Australian Paper Watch <www.australianpaper.forests.org.au>

* Hancock Watch <www.hancock.forests.org.au/docs/LoggingIndex.htm> and <www.hancock.forests.org.au/docs/certification.htm>

* FSC Annual Surveillance of SmartWood for 2007, <www.accreditation-services.com/RainforestAllianceSmartWoodProgram.htm>.

The Forgotten Forests of NSW – One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Carmel Flint

The more than four million hectares of forests on private land across NSW have been dubbed ‘the forgotten forests’. For several decades, as debate has raged about the management of the public forest estate, these private forests have been out of sight and out of mind – hidden behind unassuming rural fences, concealed by a legal wilderness where industrial logging did not require any governmental approval; the extent of logging unrecorded, the environmental impacts not considered.

In mid-2007, the NSW government finally introduced baseline regulation of logging on private land in NSW, as part of its wider native vegetation reforms. This means that all logging operations must now comply with a Code of Practice and must have a Property Vegetation Plan. The new regulation has also resulted in the collection of some baseline information, which has for the first time provided information on the scale and distribution of the industry. It was an important step forward.

However, it is, as usual, in the details where the new Code of Practice falls down badly. It is riddled with weaknesses, loopholes and inconsistencies, which provide avenues to allow logging of old growth forests, rainforest and endangered ecological communities. It does not require any surveys for threatened species and as a result does nothing to protect their most important habitats and is very weak on streamside protection.

The extent of logging revealed by the regulation is nothing short of alarming – the current rate of approvals for logging of private forests is approximately 120,000 hectares per year. This is almost three times the extent of annual logging across all public forests in NSW. If this rate of approvals continues, then by the end of the decade more than one million hectares of private forests may have faced the chop. The vast majority of current approvals are for the tall moist forests of north-eastern NSW and the river red gum forests of the south-west.

Making the situation far worse is the fact that the approval process for private logging is shrouded in a veil of secrecy. In what can only be described as a ‘special deal’ for the timber industry, logging approvals are not subject to the same public accountability provisions as clearing approvals. Furthermore, the Department of Environment and Climate Change has twice refused a straightforward Freedom of Information request for copies of a number of approvals. After a year of legal wrangling, our legal challenge to their refusal will soon be heard by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal.



From left to right: The pristine Five Day Creek flowing out of the New England Wilderness, threatened with logging by.

Old growth Blue Gum at Five Day Creek, threatened by the failures of current private logging laws.

Recent logging at Five Day Creek, which included logging of streamsidess and old growth forests, was exposed by the local community as being illegal after their water supplies were polluted.

Unfortunately, rather than implementing improvements, the NSW government is instead poised to further weaken the controls on private logging. The current regulation has been described as ‘transitional’ and the government is now preparing a new ‘Forests Act’ which will be a stand-alone Act to regulate private forestry.

There is a real risk that the government will hand over control of the new Act to the Department of Primary Industries. This would effectively put the fox in charge of the henhouse. Previous experiences in NSW of native vegetation legislation being administered by industry departments have failed dramatically.

Other major problems with the direction in which the new legislation is heading include suggestions that it will provide even more avenues to allow logging of high-conservation value forests and may give logging approvals that have no end-point. This would be unprecedented in native vegetation management in NSW.

So, the small step forward taken in 2007, with the introduction of a regulation, is already under threat and several major steps backwards are already on the agenda. Many magnificent forests are at risk, such as those at Five Day Creek, west of Kempsey. These rugged forests are part of the New England Wilderness Area, and they contain substantial areas of old growth forests and rainforest. Over the past two years, the local community has exposed substantial illegal logging in these forests in their determined attempts to protect their waterways and catchments. The future of these forests, and many like them, hangs in the balance.

Long-awaited review

For public forests, the first five-year review of the NSW Forest Agreements and the associated regulatory

regime is finally underway – these are the NSW Forest Agreements, not to be confused with the Commonwealth-State Regional Forest Agreements. The review covers Agreements along the entire eastern seaboard (apart from Sydney) including the Upper and Lower North East, Southern and Eden regions. The draft terms of reference for the review were on public exhibition for several months at the end of 2008. That draft was so restricted as to suggest that the review would ultimately result in no changes whatsoever.


Environment groups reject a do-nothing review. Climate change represents a major new threat to forest environments that was not even considered when the Agreements were signed. The likely impacts of climate change, and other new and associated threats such as forest die-back, must be properly and thoroughly considered in the reviews, and new measures put in place to improve the climate change adaptation capabilities of forests and to contribute to mitigation.

The reviews are already starting way behind the eight-ball. The North-east and Eden reviews are already almost five years late starting, and the annual reports which are supposed to track progress on the agreements have not been published since 2002. In addition, numerous key conservation milestones have never been met. These failures have been significant and broad-ranging – from failing to conduct an assessment of the World Heritage potential of eucalypt forests, to failing to conduct an eight-year review of timber supply, and failing to transfer high conservation value Crown Lands to National Parks estate.

The Terms of Reference and the scope must be broadened considerably to deliver a genuine review, and to provide opportunities for major improvements in forest conservation, which are desperately needed in the context of a rapidly warming climate. It would seem that instead of seizing this opportunity, the NSW government is intent on ticking a box and continuing with business as usual.

The review of the Forest and National Parks Estate Act, which is also underway, is a vital opportunity to reinstate third party rights to take legal action. The prosecution record of the Department of Environment on threatened species issues has been woeful, and it is time to give the community another chance to show just how much better they are at it.

Carmel Flint is a spokesperson for the North East Forest Alliance.



There has been a great deal of interest from forest conservationists lately in the opportunities that government climate policy opens for forest protection. Forest offsets are suggested as a way of abating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and protecting biodiversity.

Clearly, forest destruction leads to significant emissions (about 20% globally) and growing forests sequester carbon dioxide with the potential to substantially draw down atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. Forest protection is therefore essential to mitigate climate change and protect biodiversity. However, offsetting industrial and fossil fuel GHG emission against forest protection is at best myopic, and at worst a major risk to those very forests we wish to protect. Indeed, working to protect forests while ignoring climate change is one campaign that we ultimately must lose.

Free-market offsetting of industrial and fossil fuel emissions cannot achieve the reductions in emissions needed to avoid positive carbon feedbacks such as forest loss. Offsetting is a zero-net-sum game, in that it merely shifts emission reductions from one sector to another. It is a strategy to avoid transitioning to a low carbon economy, which is being aggressively pursued by the global timber industry, large greenhouse gas emitters and Western governments. Disappointingly, some forest conservationists are assisting this dangerous game of avoidance.

What is most strange is that some well-meaning, intelligent conservationists appear to believe that the free market will save the forests. The market has failed

Sub-prime Climate Mitigation: Beware Conservationists Bearing Offsets

Paul Winn

Forest fire near Bailey, Colorado Photo: Dave Parsons

just about every test for benevolence in the past, and is currently even failing the self-interest test.

Sub-prime mitigation

“Sub-prime” is a good term to describe climate change mitigation that includes unlimited forest offsets. And just as sub-prime mortgage schemes triggered the global financial crisis, so too will unlimited offsetting of industrial and fossil fuel emissions against forests contribute to a global environmental crisis.

Firstly, if cheap forest credits flood the carbon market, up to a 50% reduction in the carbon price may result, devaluing any competitive advantage renewable energy and low carbon technologies may achieve from carbon trading.

Secondly, indigenous rights and biodiversity will likely suffer under forest offsets, as carbon traders seek to reduce costs to maximise profits. Indeed, in some parts of the world, market trading in forest carbon may lead to gross human rights abuses and the risk of genocide is not beyond possibility. “Pygmies” in parts of the Congo have already been evicted from their forest homes under the guise of conservation, and the recent fire bombing of indigenous villages in Sumatra by Indonesian armed forces (reportedly working for a palm oil and pulp and paper producing company) is a testament to the atrocities a morally bankrupt company working in concert with a corrupt branch of government can bring about.

Thirdly, while measuring GHG emissions from fossil fuels and other industrial sources is an everyday process, measuring emissions from forest destruction is technically complex, as well as temporally and spatially challenging. The uncertainties associated with such measurements mean that we cannot confidently predict that market trading between industrial emissions and forests can lead to similar reductions in emissions.

Finally, carbon stored in forests is not permanent, it is in constant flux. Only fossil carbon is permanently stored. Fire, pests, disease, senescence and decay affect even the most pristine old-growth forests. Climate change could lead to many forests of the world becoming emission sources. Offsetting on short-term forest protection will bring about these climate impacts much more quickly and see additional carbon entering the atmosphere after 2050.

This latter point is often a bone of contention amongst market/offset proponents. However, the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states with very high confidence that:

“Forests, especially in the boreal region, have been identified as having a high potential vulnerability to climate change in the long term, but more immediately if disturbance regimes (drought, insects, fire), partly due to climate change, cross critical thresholds. Since the Third Assessment Report, most ... models based on A2 emissions scenarios show significant forest dieback towards the end of this century and beyond in tropical, boreal and mountain areas, with a concomitant loss of key services.”

“Species-based approaches suggest losses of diversity, in particular in tropical forest diversity hotspots (e.g., north-eastern Amazonia and tropical Africa). Mountain forests are increasingly encroached upon from adjacent lowlands, while simultaneously losing high-altitude habitats due to warming.”

Sub-prime mitigation

The impacts identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are also likely to be felt by Australian forests, as well as other ecosystems. As the preferred mean annual temperature range of 25% of Eucalyptus species found in Australia is less than 1°C and a further 53% have a range of less than 3°C, most Australian forests ecosystems will find it increasingly difficult to remain stable even under some of the most conservative climate change scenarios.

For example, in south-western West Australia, Jarrah forests may contract further to the south west and be replaced by more open Wandoo woodlands. Many Eucalypt species of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, listed in 2000 for its outstanding universal significance of eucalypt-dominated vegetation, may have difficulty adapting to temperatures predicted for 2070. In Tasmania, dieback of White Gum forests is likely to expand with the expected increase in drought caused by climate change.

Moreover, forests are likely to be at far greater risk from pests and disease due to climate change. Many Australian forests are already threatened by disease, like the fungus *Phytophthora cinnamoni* which is causing dieback in south-western and eastern Australia. Climate change is increasing temperatures and carbon dioxide levels that will be more favourable for the spread of this disease.

By 2100, forest ecosystems will be exposed to atmospheric carbon dioxide levels substantially higher than in the past 650,000 years, and global temperatures at least among the highest of those experienced in the past 740,000 years. Within the next few decades, many eucalypts will have their entire present day population exposed to temperatures and rainfalls under which no individuals currently exist.

Under anthropogenic climate change, ecosystems and species will not have the luxury of long transition periods of past climate shifts in which to migrate or adapt; and given the fragmentation that Australian ecosystems have been subjected to, it is unlikely even under longer transition periods that species loss would be substantially reduced.

Climate change will cause greatly increased forest degradation from fire and drought that may ultimately see transitions to lower carbon ecosystems such as grasslands, woodlands and heaths in many areas. By 2050, the increase in the Forest Fire Danger Index is predicted to be

up to 30% and the number of ‘extreme’ fire danger days increases by up to 300%.

All this leads to the conclusion that forests must be protected – for biodiversity and water catchments protection reasons, to maintain local weather patterns, as well as GHG abatement – and that we have to massively reduce fossil fuel and industrial emissions if we are to protect forests. We must stop deforestation globally, increase carbon stored in forests by allowing forests to re-establish, grow plantations and reduce forest and peat land degradation. But doing these things does not mean we can reduce our efforts to tackle industrial and fossil fuel emissions.

We can reduce emissions from forest destruction in much more sophisticated ways than through free-market trading. Unlike the timber industry, the big emitters and the Australian government, who are falling over themselves to maximise forest offsets under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the environment movement should be providing leadership and putting forward progressive climate solutions rather than pushing easy ways out of doing the right thing. Setting aside a proportion of auctioned carbon pollution permits that go to a dedicated fund for forest and biodiversity protection is one idea that Greenpeace is promoting. A carbon tax on timber harvesting is another promising way forward.

To win the battle against climate change and to secure the world’s forests, we must have a revolution in the way we generate and use energy, as well as an end to forest destruction. One or the other simply won’t do the job.

More information:

* Greenpeace, 2008, “Tropical Deforestation Emission Reduction Mechanism: A Discussion Paper”,
<www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/TDERM-full>.

A referenced version of this article is available from
<chainreaction@foe.org.au>.

Paul Winn is a climate and forest campaigner with Greenpeace Australia Pacific. <paul.winn@greenpeace.org>

Australia Must Take the Lead in Stopping the Illegal Timber Trade

Lee Tan

Australia's northern neighbours are the stewards of some of the world's most precious remaining primary tropical rainforests. More than 57% of the Asia-Pacific region's intact forest landscapes are in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

These forests provide vital ecosystem services such as food, medicines and reliable clean water on which millions of people depend for their livelihoods and cultural identity. Tropical rainforests also have enormous value for the global community – as a vital source of genetic biodiversity, the provision of ecosystem services such as rainfall generation, habitat conservation and soil stabilisation, and for their crucial role in regulating carbon cycles.

The debate about climate change has invigorated discussion on forest conservation and protection. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that around 20% of the annual global carbon emission comes from deforestation and forest degradation.

Following the widespread coverage of the visit to Australia of renowned British economist Sir Nicholas Stern, former Prime Minister John Howard committed \$200 million towards a Global Initiative on Forests and Climate in March 2007. Then environment minister Malcolm Turnbull visited Indonesia in the following month to promote the new initiative. His visit prompted the Indonesian government to appropriately call on Australia to pass regulations preventing the import of illegally logged timber from Indonesian forests. While Indonesia welcomed Australia's \$200 million initiative, it wants forest imports to Australia regulated. This call was too much for the Howard government. It preferred timber importers to regulate themselves.

In the lead up to the 2007 Australian election, the ALP challenged the Howard government to join "Labor in committing to strong action in Australia to ban the import of illegal timber", but no effective action has been taken since Labor came to power.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has entered into Forest Carbon Partnership agreements with the PNG and Indonesian governments. Both agreements are thin on details. They skirt around the edges of the underlying causes and drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

So far, they have focused on setting up projects to facilitate carbon trading that require expensive and complex bureaucracy. This is ironic since Indonesia and



Gildipasi landowners in ceremonial gear celebrating the renewal of their conservation deed of agreement - 27th August 2008

Local Action to Protect Rainforests in PNG

In 2008, the prime ministers of Australia and Papua New Guinea signed a 'carbon and forests partnership'. But the people of the Gildipasi area in PNG's Madang province aren't waiting for bureaucrats in Canberra and Port Moresby to work out the details of the new partnership. They are protecting their forests now.

Five years ago the Conservation Deed came into being, protecting 1,000 hectares of ecologically rich tropical rainforest. The people decided on the conservation deed after ejecting a multinational timber company from their lands, unhappy about what logging was doing to their forests, their water supplies and their culture.

"Our forest was being logged out," says landowner Alfred Kaket, one of the prime movers behind the conservation deed. "The company used our rivers to wash their machines and the waste of the machines, the grease and oil, they were flowing into our rivers.

"When the company was here, all our birds and animals, they had gone. They didn't like the noise of the chainsaws, the bulldozers."

Now the loggers are gone. No resource extraction or felling of trees is allowed in the thousand hectare conservation area. The people earn cash income farming cocoa, copra, vanilla and other crops on their land outside the protected zone.

In five years the villagers have seen their forests come back to life. Alfred Kaket says freshwater prawns and eels are back in the rivers, while cassowaries and bush fowl are again breeding in the rainforest.

Thanks to the leadership of Alfred Kaket – with the help of Madang based NGO, the Bismarck Ramu Group – several neighbouring clans have now added their lands to the conservation area, taking the total protected zone to 1,928 hectares. The new Conservation Deed was signed and celebrated at a huge sing sing at Simbukanam village in July 2008.

Scientists who study the relationship between trees and climate change say the carbon stored in natural forests is a larger and more reliable stock than the carbon stored in commercial plantations. The Gildipasi clans of PNG may be conserving their land for their children and grandchildren's sake, but in the process they are doing a favour for our children and grandchildren too.

Josh Meadows is the ACF Media Adviser.



Papua New Guineans protesting logging operations on their land.

PNG are both countries with poor track records in forest governance and law enforcement. Indonesia scored 2.6 out of 10 and PNG 2.0 in the Corruption Perception Index released by anti-corruption organisation Transparency International in 2008.

According to the World Bank, illegal logging costs developing countries worldwide around US\$15 billion a year in lost revenue. In Indonesia, more than 70% of log production is believed to be derived from illegal sources. And in Papua New Guinea, where Australia is a major aid donor, more than 80% of log production is believed to be illegal. Almost one quarter of hardwood lumber and 30% of hardwood plywood traded globally is of suspicious origin.

At least \$400 million worth of illegally logged timber and timber products is imported into Australia every year according to a consultant's report prepared for the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in 2006. This undercuts sales of Australia's own legal timber, domestically and on the international market.

Rampant illegal logging of many of the world's remaining tropical forests is a direct result of the massive demand for cheap tropical timber in the United States, Europe, Japan and China. The voracious appetite for tropical timber in the world's most affluent nations and in the emerging Chinese market is devastating the natural estate of the developing countries that feed them.

The devastation is not only ecological, but social, cultural and financial. The harvesting of tropical timber is dominated by a number of multinational logging firms including a number of well known Malaysian companies that have been linked to international criminal syndicates.

In PNG and Indonesia, illegal logging is synonymous with corruption, bribery, fraud and in some cases, extreme violence and human rights abuses. The trade has been linked to trans-boundary smuggling of high power firearms and human trafficking. It severely hampers local law enforcement capability, undermines nation-building efforts in the region and ultimately threatens regional security.

One of the most effective options for reducing illegal logging is to reduce the demand for illegally logged timber. Australia should only allow the importation and sale of timber and wood products that are independently certified as legally and sustainably sourced; and establish an effective timber certification scheme that is supported by well-resourced monitoring and enforcement.

Apart from stopping the inflow of illegally source timber and timber products, the Australian government can heed a good lesson from communities in PNG on how they have protected their forests.

In August 2008, one community in the Gildipasi area of Madang province in PNG got together in a colourful, traditional ceremony to extend their deed of conservation to protect nearly 2,000 hectares of rainforests which are under their customary ownership.

Their action provides an inspiration to other forest-dependent communities and should prompt the Australian government to honour its election commitment to only allow the import of timber that has been independently certified as legally and sustainably sourced.

More information

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Grim Climate Outcomes at Poznan Climate Conference

Hannah Elvery and Steph Long

Friends of the Earth International went to the UN climate negotiations in Poznan, Poland in December 2008, hoping for progress. We hoped industrialised countries would commit to steep emission reductions - without offset loopholes - and would announce their willingness to support developing country mitigation and adaptation actions.

The outcomes of the Poznan talks however, were thoroughly lamentable. Over 11,000 people travelled across the world for two weeks of negotiations only to come away with virtually no political outcomes. It was an extraordinary waste of resources, and a very bad outcome for the billions who are already being affected both by climate change and the so-called 'solutions' being marketed in the international policy arena.

Responsibility for the distinct lack of achievement in Poland falls squarely on the shoulders of the rich industrialised countries who after 16 years, and despite the rhetoric we have heard about urgency, are still failing to take the climate crisis seriously and realise their obligations. Instead, most wealthy industrialised countries spent the majority of this precious negotiating time in Poland crafting get-out-clauses and offsetting schemes at the expense of genuine reductions in emissions. We saw, yet again, the same obstructionist, business-as-usual approach of developed countries.

To achieve necessary emissions reductions globally, finance and genuine renewable and efficient technology must be urgently delivered to allow Southern nations to make a just-transition towards low-carbon development. Negotiations on forest protection in developing countries must ensure the custodial rights and rights of free, prior, informed consent of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are genuinely protected. Monoculture tree plantations must be excluded from the definition of forests and there must be an absolute rejection of the privatisation of forests through market-based schemes.

This seriously damaging stalling at the annual UN climate negotiations in Poland was combined with substantial regression in climate and energy policy at the European Union in Brussels. On December 12, the EU package offered 20-30% emissions cuts by 2020 – the latter dependant on the level of international commitment – with 60% of these obligations to be met through offsets overseas. In other words, the EU is proposing that almost two-thirds of its inadequate emission reductions will be

met through purchasing emissions reductions 'credits' from other countries to allow business-as-usual pollution in the EU.

This was followed by the inadequate emissions reduction targets announced by the Australian government on December 14. All these elements combined to mark 2009 as a year when substantial shifts in political will in rich, industrialised countries are required if there is any worth in the agreement to be reached at the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen in December. Without reaching an agreement in December, there is a substantial risk that the UN climate talks will fail to establish a second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012.

Deal or no deal?

However, we have to seriously consider what kind of agreement might be forged at Copenhagen and if this will be more damaging than no agreement at all. Many of the developments at the UN climate talks are damaging. For example, the clean development mechanism is proposed to be expanded to include the options of nuclear power, so-called 'clean-coal' or carbon capture and storage, and 'exhausted forests' which is code for plantations that are beyond their commercial viability.

The World Bank is currently receiving the bulk of climate finance, which is not being delivered as appropriate community-based adaptation in Southern countries, supporting genuine clean technology. The World Bank is increasingly influencing the climate agenda through the promotion of multiple 'pilot' carbon trading and financing schemes, many of which are fuelling the expansion of voluntary carbon markets which are increasing the political acceptance of trade-based mechanisms and programs, and diverting donors from the UNFCCC adaptation funds. The World Bank is a major polluter, deforester and human rights violator and the hypocrisy of this same institution becoming the leading climate financier must be exposed.

During the REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Developing Countries) negotiations in Poznan, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia forced the language on Indigenous Peoples' rights to be deleted from the main body of the decision text. This led to a spontaneous protest by Indigenous



Peoples who chanted “No Rights! No REDD!” (a stance that is firmly supported by Friends of the Earth as without the recognition of rights we do not want REDD to continue). The REDD proposals would finance land grabbing, the violation of Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ rights, and create the climate regime’s greatest loophole.

With a plethora of environmentally and socially devastating technologies and practices seeking legitimacy through the international climate negotiations, a key question to ask is: Is this the kind of ‘deal’ that we want? And if it isn’t, then is a bad deal better than no deal at all?

Even the framing of the climate negotiations and pre-occupation with a ‘deal’ implies that this is something to be bargained, something that each of the nations have to give and take on. This contradicts two of the fundamental aspects of the UN climate convention: that the historically responsible, rich industrialised countries must reduce emissions first and fastest; and that they must finance the adaptation needs, technology sharing and mitigation actions of Southern countries. These are the requirements for a just agreement, but to date neither of these obligations have been met and they are currently being played off against each other, smoothed over in the polite doublespeak of international diplomacy.

A number of wealthy industrialised countries, including Australia, are using the concept of a ‘deal’ to reopen the principle of historical responsibility and shift the blame onto major developing countries such as India and China, rather than acknowledging the years of failure

of rich countries to live up to their historical and legal responsibilities of emissions reductions and finance for the Global South.

While climate change requires global action, the historical responsibility for the vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions over the past 250 years lies with the industrialised countries of the global North. Communities in the global South (as well as low-income communities in the North) are still bearing the toxic burden of this fossil fuel extraction and are facing the worst impacts of climate change. Now, they are also staring down the path of a new form of colonialism, with international climate policies that force them to bear the financial and social costs of mitigating the global North’s carbon intensive development. Wealthy, industrialised countries have failed to commit despite the full knowledge of their actions and historical responsibility, and their current policy positions are further entrenching global inequalities.

So while we debate whether a bad deal this year is better than no deal at all, it is crucial that we still use the momentum of the climate talks in Copenhagen to put pressure on national governments with strong justice-based demands. To do so, we must build a global peoples movement to achieve all of our goals: keeping fossil fuels in the ground and transitioning to renewables; radically reducing luxury consumption in the global North; rejecting forest carbon trading and supporting land rights; stopping the World Bank and empowering communities; and ultimately, creating more sustainable societies.

National Climate Summit Rejects Rudd's Flawed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme

Louise Morris

"The absurd thing is, under Rudd's scheme you would do more for the planet by buying a tonne of carbon directly from Alcoa and burning it in your backyard than you would by making your home 100% carbon neutral," said Richard Dennis of the Australia Institute, while conducting his workshop on the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme at Australia's Climate Action Summit in Canberra earlier this year.

It is this stark reality that drove much of the discussion, decision-making and action at the Summit. Over 140 community based climate action groups and more than 500 people came together in Canberra to talk, debate, strategise and take action on climate change at Australia's Climate Action Summit.

This national grassroots activist summit was the first of its kind in Australia. The variety of people who travelled to Canberra for the four days was astounding. In attendance were CSIRO scientists, stay-at-home mums, ex-coal workers, members of think tanks, civil servants, union members, teachers and people who were coming along to represent their community climate action group at the summit.

The discussions and decisions made at this summit were notable for their depth of analysis, knowledge of the politics of the day and the acknowledgement of the urgency with which we need to come together to act on climate change. The opening plenary featured David Spratt, co-author of *Climate Code Red*, explaining the emergence of new weather patterns in the Arctic, the unheralded lack of Arctic summer sea ice and the increase in extreme weather patterns driven by anthropogenic climate change in the past year.

Summit participants then went off to their respective workshops, strategy and network development streams. After three days of crunching information, opinions, strategy and votes, three core campaign objectives for the national grassroots climate campaign were decided upon. In 2009, the united Community Climate Action Groups will campaign to:

- Prevent the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme from becoming law, as it will fail to make emission cuts necessary to stop the climate emergency.
- Build community-wide action to demand green jobs, a just transition for affected workers and 100% renewable energy by 2020.
- Aim for stabilisation at 300ppm CO₂ and strong



Photos: Greenpeace Australia

international agreement in line with what science and global justice demands.

It is with this unified set of objectives and a set of dates for community based action on climate change for 2009, that people wrapped up the cerebral part of the summit in readiness for the finale of Australia's Climate Action Summit - a human chain encircling Parliament House for the first sitting day of 2009.

There were a few minor obstacles we had to overcome in pulling this action off, one of which was the government's refusal to give the people of Australia permission to stand around the perimeter of federal parliament holding hands - so we did it anyway. Knowing that we faced the risk of being moved on by the police, and possible arrest, 2,500 people wearing red came to federal parliament in Canberra and succeeded in showing that Australians are united in making climate change the top ticket in the political and social agenda in Australia.

The challenge we face in 2009 is to bring more and more people together to build and strengthen this inspired and intelligent climate movement that will power forward from the Canberra summit.

Australia's Climate Action Summit was sponsored by Friends of the Earth, Australia and Greenpeace Australia.
<www.climatesummit.org.au>



“There is growing evidence that nanoparticles used in sunscreens could make sun damage worse.”

FoE Releases Nanotechnology Sunscreen Guide

Georgia Miller

Many Australian sunscreens now include nanoparticles, but there is growing evidence that nanoparticles used in sunscreens could make sun damage worse. Test tube studies have shown that nanoparticles of titanium dioxide and zinc oxide commonly used in sunscreens can produce free radicals, damage DNA and be toxic to cells, especially when exposed to UV light.

In an early warning sign, researchers from Blue Scope Steel have found that roofs which have come into contact with sunscreens containing nanoparticles age 100 times more rapidly than surrounding areas of roof that have not. There is also early evidence that nanoparticles used in sunscreens are toxic to water fleas, fish and algae that are used as environmental indicator species. Again, the toxic effect of these nanoparticles may be greater with UV exposure.

We still don't know whether nanoparticles used in sunscreens will penetrate intact healthy adult skin. This is the subject of ongoing investigation by the CSIRO and others. However we do know that at least some nanoparticles can penetrate skin, especially if the skin is flexed. Recent research on mice has demonstrated that skin penetration by nanoparticles is more likely in sunburnt skin. We also know that even particles much bigger than nanoparticles can be taken up through broken or damaged skin. This suggests that where skin is not intact – for example if someone has eczema or acne

– nanoparticles could be much more likely to be taken up by their skin.

Until we know that nano-sunscreens are safe for the workers who manufacture them, everyone who uses them, and the environmental systems into which they are released, they shouldn't be on sale.

Safe Sunscreen Guide

Nano-sunscreens aren't labelled, making it very hard for anyone to make an informed choice about using them or not. To help you choose a nano-free sunscreen, Friends of the Earth has released Australia's first nano-free sunscreen guide.

Twenty-one of 68 Australian brands surveyed by FoE have told us that their sunscreens are now free of nanotechnology ingredients. Several of these brands also offer sunscreens that are free of other chemicals about which safety concerns have been raised. You can view or download our guide at <<http://nano.foe.org.au>>. If you would like us to send you more free copies of the guide, please call (03) 9419 8700.

Since the release of the Safe Sunscreen Guide, FoE has been overwhelmed by interest in the nano-sunscreen issue. The good news is that there is really strong public support for a precautionary approach to managing the new risks

Some sunscreens sold in Australia have the potential to cause skin damage. They contain tiny particles (nanoparticles)

of nano-sunscreens and for mandatory labelling of nano-ingredients. Some sunscreen companies have told us that they are now receiving 60 phone calls a day about their use of nano! A great result of this public pressure is the growing number of sunscreen brands that are making the decision to go 'nano-free'.

Take action

We need your help to stop sales of unsafe, unlabelled nano-sunscreens. If you are part of a parents' group, sports club, union or community organisation that could be interested in helping distribute our safe-sunscreen guide, publishing an article in your newsletter, or working with us to help keep sunscreens safe, please get in touch with us!

Strong laws are needed to protect people and the environment from nanoparticle risks. However, the Australian national sunscreen regulator (the Therapeutic Goods Administration) refuses to make sunscreen companies do safety testing of nano-ingredients, refuses to make sunscreen companies label nano-ingredients, and refuses to publish a list of which sunscreens contain nanoparticles and which don't.

Legal and medical academics at the Australian National University and Monash University have suggested that given their new risks, a precautionary approach should be used to regulate nano-sunscreens. The 2008 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Nanotechnology also called for nanoparticles to be treated as new chemicals (which would require safety testing) and for their use in sunscreens and cosmetics to be labelled. So far, their calls have been ignored.

Please ask federal health minister Nicola Roxon to stop sales of nano-sunscreens until they pass new safety testing and until nano-ingredients are labelled to give you an informed choice. Email <Nicola.Roxon.MP@aph.gov.au>, ph (02) 6277 7220.

More information:

FoE Nanotechnology Project and Safe Sunscreen Guide
<<http://nano.foe.org.au>>

The 7.30 Report coverage of the nano-sunscreen issue which features FoE:
<www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2449409.htm>.

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Talisman Sabre War Games: US Forces Give the Nod

Kristy Henderson

From July 6-26, over 8,000 Australian troops and 15,000 US troops will be converging on locations around Australia to engage in the Talisman Sabre Military Training Exercises (TS09). These exercises are under the direction of the US and include live naval, aerial, land-based and underwater bombings in some of Australia's most sensitive and significant landscapes.

Joint US/Australian military training exercises of the size and scope of TS09 began in 2005 after the former defence minister Robert Hill announced in 2003 that joint exercises and other measures would be taken to ensure seamless interoperability between the US and Australian military. 'Interoperability' essentially means the gradual fusion of US and Australian forces, such that the Australian Defence Force becomes a de-facto arm of the US military.

The central location for these war games is Shoalwater Bay in central Queensland, which is the largest wilderness area left on the central coast, and hosts internationally listed RAMSAR wetlands as well as undisturbed sea grass meadows, which provide prime habitat for the endangered dugong and green turtle. Shoalwater Bay is also part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and is home to many endangered whale and dolphin species. In fact, Shoalwater Bay is one of the only places to be completely free of exotic fish. During the 2007 Talisman Sabre exercises, the rare albino whale 'Migaloo' was sighted in the vicinity of Shoalwater Bay, where the US military was, and will be, using live active sonar, which is known to affect cetaceans, causing haemorrhaging of the brain and death. The Cowley Beach Training Area, also to be used during TS09, is also a part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.



The Bradshaw and Delamere Field Ranges will be used primarily for live bombing and aircraft manoeuvres during TS09. The Bradshaw range is home to a number of endangered and rare species such as the Gouldian Finch and the Northern Quoll. According to the federal Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, the Bradshaw range contains unusually rich vertebrate fauna, second only to Kakadu, and supports approximately 70% of rare and endangered species of the Victoria-Bonaparte region.

According to Zohr de Ishtar, from the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, the US military build-up in the Pacific is centred on Guam and aims to control shipping lanes and other vital resources should conflict with China or Russia occur.

The consequences of having US Bases in Australia include:

- Increased rates of sexual assault and abuse on civilians as seen through the experience of the people in Okinawa, Japan.
- The destruction of some of our most amazing wilderness areas.
- An increased political culture of secrecy and denial, leading to the erosion of Australian sovereignty, democracy and independence, as evidenced by the presence of the US spy base, Pine Gap, in Central Australia.
- Increased military spending as Australia tries to 'keep up' with their military buddies. The Australian military budget currently equals about \$62 million each day, which is enough to solve our public health crisis.

- Increased security risk as Australia becomes a more likely nuclear weapons target.
- Increased difficulties for Indigenous people wanting access and control over their traditional lands. The Darumbal people, the traditional owners of Shoalwater Bay, have limited rights and access to their traditional lands and are tokenistically consulted over the managing of the Shoalwater Bay Area.
- Increased involvement in morally repugnant and illegal wars as evidenced through Australia's participation in the war on Iraq.

The National Peace Convergence Alliance is calling on people across Australia to oppose the Talisman Sabre Exercises. A national convergence on Shoalwater Bay will be occurring throughout the duration of the training exercises with a Committed to Change Festival, showcasing peaceful and sustainable alternatives, occurring from July 3-5. The national convergence aims to disrupt and raise awareness about these training exercises through non-violent means.

The Melbourne Peace Convergence Collective is looking to raise funds to purchase a bus in order to take people from the south to Shoalwater Bay and in the longer term provide transport for people involved in the peace movement in Southern Australia. The Melbourne Peace Convergence Collective meets regularly. National Phone Conferences also happen monthly. To get involved or donate contact Kristy, 0421 323839 or email <kmhen7@gmail.com>.

More information: <www.peaceconvergence.com>.

Response to 'Strzelecki Forest Sell Out'

*By Gavan McFadzean
The Wilderness Society's Victorian Campaigns Manager*

It is tragic that FoE's forest campaign has resorted to using its own journal to attack another environment group, because it is disappointed with a forest outcome it negotiated, but unfortunately that is what they chose to do in their last Chain Reaction ('Strzelecki Forest Sell Out', Chain Reaction #104). I hope other environmental groups, including mine, never follow suit.

Campaigns to protect forests in Australia almost never deliver the level or extent of forest protection environment groups hope for, and unfortunately incremental protection of old growth forests and critical habitat for flora and fauna is usually the outcome of forest campaigns.

This is indeed the case with the recent outstanding outcome for Victoria's red gum forests, the result of successful and harmonious joint work between The Wilderness Society (TWS), FoE and other groups. Over 95,000 hectares protected, the Brumby government warmly congratulated by both groups, yet over half of Gunbower, the state's second largest red gum forest, is left unprotected and will be heavily logged.

The Bracks government's exceptional announcement in 2002 to create a 100,000 hectare Greater Otway National Park and move logging into plantations, again received universal applause, including praise from TWS and FoE. This is despite the logging industry being given a five year deadline to get out of the forests which has just expired, during which time many areas of high conservation value have been destroyed.

The list goes on, with some of the most significant and celebrated forest protection wins in the last ten years across Australia still leaving much work to be done and neighbouring forests destroyed, and sometimes at a faster rate than before. Forest campaigning is tragically a race against time.

The recent protection of forests in the Strzelecki Ranges is such an outcome – a step forward but with more forests in the region in urgent need of protection. The precious College Creek for example is under immediate threat from the chainsaws.

Despite accusations made in Chain Reaction, TWS played no part in the Strzelecki negotiations, on FoE's request. There was no 'sell out' by The Wilderness Society or any other group, but there were a series of negotiating errors by FoE.

For example, in a key strategic error which may have affected the outcome, the FoE forest campaign broke a promise to TWS not to reveal to any third party the content of discussions regarding whether TWS's role in supporting FoE to broker an outcome. Unbelievably FoE revealed the nature of these discussions to the state government, substantially weakening their negotiating position to protect Strzelecki's, and damaging their credibility as a negotiator in good faith with government in the near future.

TWS also made every effort to maximize FoE's media exposure following the Strzelecki decision, for which we are now disingenuously being criticized.

TWS hopes that all the forest protection aspirations for the Strzelecki's can be achieved as soon as possible and offers its assistance to this and any other forest campaign if it's welcome and if our resources allow.

Instead of blaming others, we urge the FoE forest campaign to reflect on its own performance, look at how to lift its competency in negotiating spaces with government and industry, and to campaign in a way that assists and respects, rather than jeopardizes, other campaigns being run by conservation groups working tirelessly to protect forests in other parts of the country.

In its favour it has FoE's other outstanding campaigns, such as its Nuclear, Climate, Nanotech and Red Gum work from which to draw in being more effective in its forest campaign in the future.

*Like to comment on anything you've read in Chain Reaction?
Send a letter to the editor <chainreaction@foe.org.au>.*

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<www.reversegarbage.com.au>

RIDE PLANET EARTH
<http://rideplanetearth.org>

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY NOW (Perth)
<contact@sen.asn.au>
<www.sen.asn.au>

WEST MALLEE PROTECTION (SA)
Cat Beaton 0434 257 359
Breony Carbines 0423 910 492
Cat Beaton 0434 257 359
<kokathamulacamp@gmail.com>
<www.kokathamula.auspics.org.au>

Operation Talisman Sabre is the name for the biennial war games between Australian and the United States military and will run for three weeks in July this year. These joint exercises occur in some of the most environmentally precious locations in Australia including the biodiverse region of Shoalwater Bay on the central coast of Queensland. A Peace Convergence is planned for July 2009 to call for an end to our involvement in war and war preparations :: info@peaceconvergence.com :: www.peaceconvergence.com

MAP OF US MILITARY FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIA COMPARED WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PINE GAP
ALICE SPRINGS

NASA
TOBINGULLA ACT

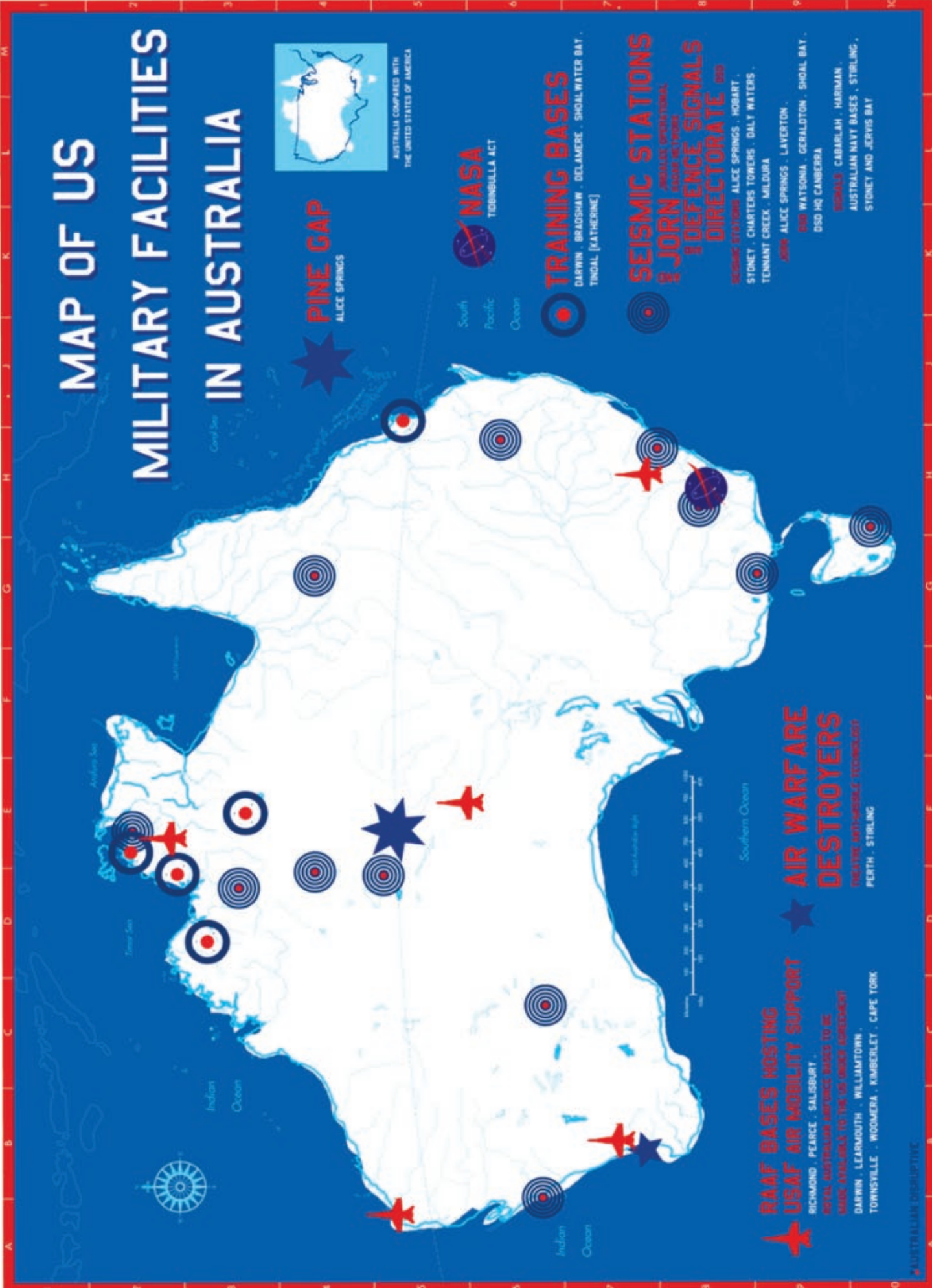
TRAINING BASES
DARWIN · BRADSHAW · DELAMERE · SHOALWATER BAY · TINDAL (KATHERINE)

SEISMIC STATIONS
JORN (AUSTRALIAN OPERATIONAL) (USAF NETWORK)
DEFENCE SIGNALS DIRECTORATE (DS)
ROSEBY STATION · ALICE SPRINGS · HOBART · STONEY · CHARTERS TOWERS · DALY WATERS · TENNANT CREEK · MILDURA

RAAF Bases Hosting USAF Air Mobility Support
RICHMOND · PEARCE · SALISBURY
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE Bases TO BE USED AS US ONLY TO THE US (USAF AIRCRAFT)
DARWIN · LEARMOUTH · WILLIAMTOWN · TOWNSVILLE · WOOMERA · KIMBERLEY · CAPE YORK

AIR WARFARE DESTROYERS
TUESDAY (ART-ASSETTE TECHNOLOGY) · PERTH · STIRLING

USAFAL · CABARLIGH · HARMAN · AUSTRALIAN NAVY BASES · STIRLING · STONEY AND JERVIS BAY



PEACE CONVERGENCE 3 - 26 July 2009 www.peaceconvergence.com

RADIOACTIVE EXPOSURE TOUR 2009



15-24
MAY



The amazing Radioactive Exposure Tour is on again!

Join Friends of the Earth for a journey to South Australia where we will visit the Olympic Dam uranium mine at Roxby Downs, the beautiful Lake Eyre and Mound Springs and meet with Aboriginal people campaigning against the nuclear industry.

Indigenous people across the world suffer most directly from the impacts of the nuclear industry and this 'radioactive racism' is a major focus of the tour. We will also visit the beautiful Gammon Ranges and Arkaroola, the not-so-beautiful Beverley uranium mine, and much else besides.

The tour offers a unique opportunity to go out on to country and witness the impacts of the nuclear industry on people and the environment. We are particularly keen for you to come along if you are involved, or are considering getting involved in anti-nuclear campaigning.

Total cost of the tour will include travel, accommodation and organic vegetarian food plus paying the rent to Aboriginal communities.

Cost: \$450 concession, \$750 waged and \$1,000 solidarity.

Contacts:

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