Wombat Forest Guardian

SEPTEMBER 1994. NUMBER ONE. QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY INC. PO BOX 51 TRENTHAM, 3458.

Wombat Residents Stand Up For Their Forest's Future

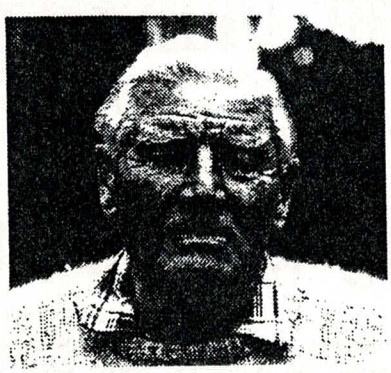
In just over four months of activity, the Wombat Forest Society (WFS) has achieved a member and support base of nearly 900 people, with ongoing support that increases day by day.

"This commitment makes the Wombat Forest Society just about the largest and most active community based Forest Action Group in Australia today," says WFS Director, Alan Gray.

"I think the intial success of the WFS has been due to the inclusive nature of our approach to saving local jobs and our forest. There's no *us*-and-*them*. Everyone with a concern is invited to join."

A look at the 173 paid-up member families shows a fair representation of our community and district. The WFS has members in Blackwood, Newlyn, Korweinguboora, Macedon, Daylesford, Kyneton, Ballarat and other localities, as well as Melbourne and beyond.

"All sorts of people have joined — timber workers past and present, old families, new settlers, students, mums and dads, united by their concern that the Wombat Forest is not being properly managed or sustainably harvested," said WFS Treasurer, Karen Sandow.



New Wombat Forest Society member and supporter, Tom Garnett, is a respected local flora and fauna expert, creator of the Garden of St Erth at Blackwood, and a gardening columnist for *The Age*.

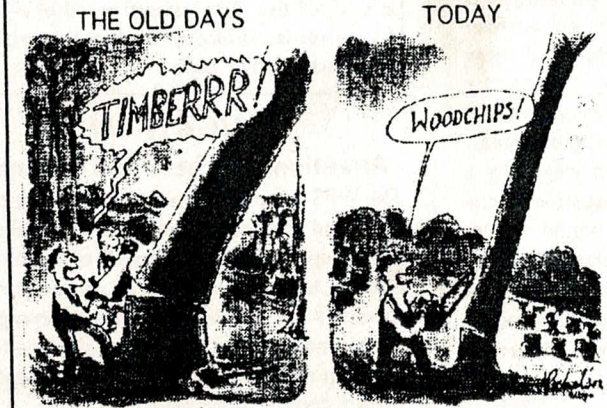
"JOBS NOT WOODCHIPS FOR THE WOMBAT FOREST"

SPREAD THE WORD. Durable, weatherproof WFS stickers. Only $1.50 each, posted, from PO Box 51 Trentham, 3458, or $1.00 each from the WFS stall at the Daylesford Sunday market.

DAYLESFORD GENERAL MEETING FOR SOCIETY MEMBERS

On Tuesday 27 September the Wombat Forest Society will be holding a General Meeting of members and supporters at the Daylesford Secondary College in Smith Street at 7:30 PM. All members and supporters are welcome. The night will include a presentation on 'Forest Dwellers And Their Habitats' by Wombat Forest Society committee member and lifelong Daylesford resident, Monty Kirby. There will also be reports and presentations from each of the six WFS committees: Fundraising/ market stall, Materials/visual production, Forest/research, Media, Legal/political, and Education.

This is the opportunity for any members or supporters to get directly involved in campaign work by joining one of the six committees. Supper available.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

The past four months have been hectic and exciting for the Wombat Forest Society. The concerns of the Wombat Forest Society are not new — people throughout the region have been concerned for years about the overcutting of the forest, the massive destruction caused by clearfelling and woodchipping, and the criminal waste of good timber left burnt and wasted on the ground at the end of the Government's 'harvesting' operations.

It's hard to imagine any other country in the world which could be so wasteful as to burn enough timber on its forest floors to heat the homes of every resident of the region for a whole year.

I have been inspired by the timber workers and sawmillers — current and retired — who are supporting the Society directly, and helping us gather evidence of questionable, even illegal, woodchipping operations in our forest.

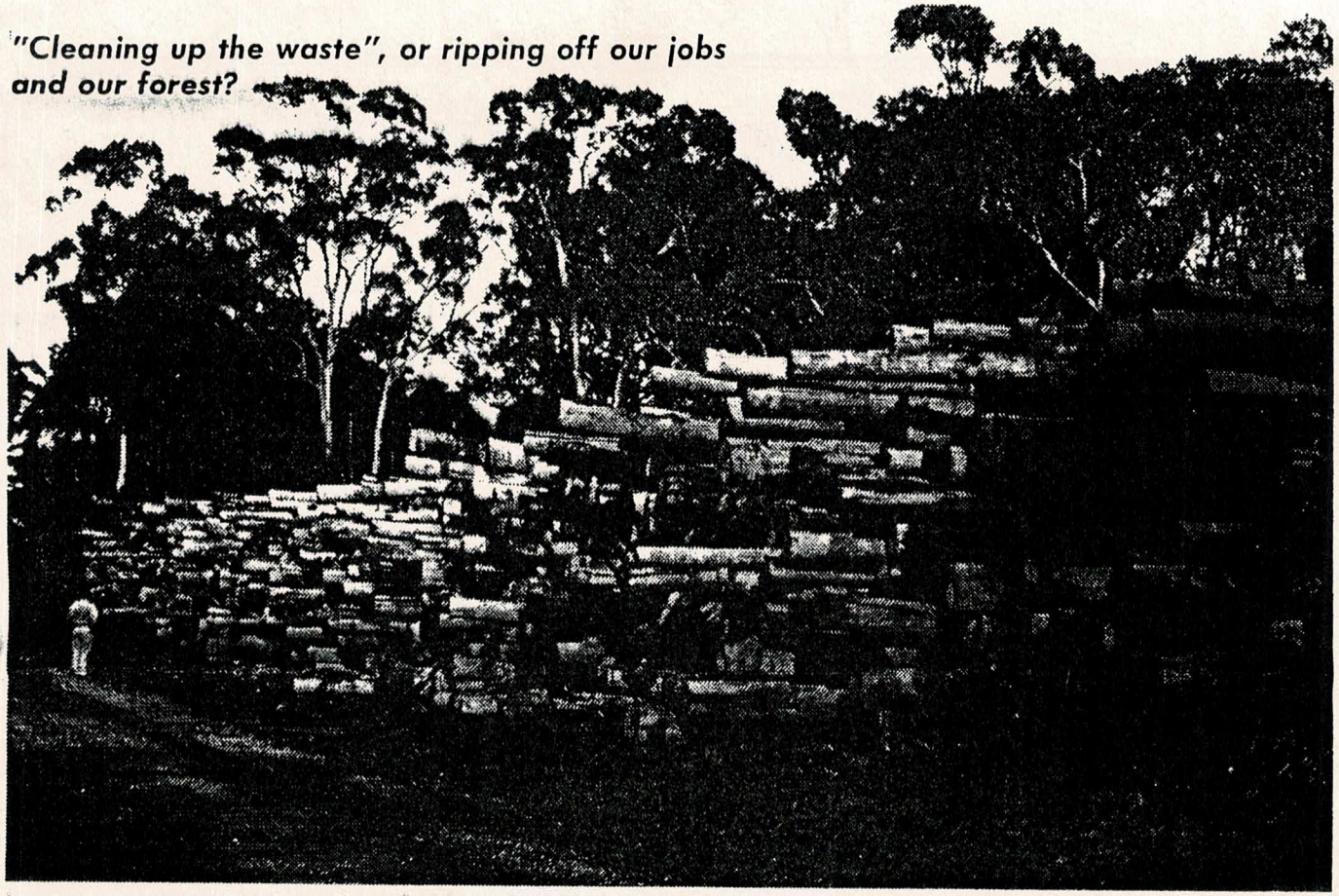
The guts of the problem are simple: the woodchippers claim they "only take the waste" and that if they didn't, there would be massive waste left on the forest floor. Well, anyone can take a ten minute drive into the forest and see that the burnt waste left on the forest floor is greater in recent coupes than from the areas cut before the woodchippers were let in. And the piles of logs ready to be taken to chip mills (try Osborne Road, Bullarto, the Leonards Hill Rd, or Peukers Lane in South Lyonville) contain trees which would have made good sawlogs if they'd been left in the ground for another 20 years.

Meanwhile, the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources obviously doesn't have a clue about how to manage our forest sustainably. They've admitted in meetings that they have no idea of the rate at which the Wombat regrows each year. In May they said in *The Age* that they plan to log about 1000 hectares of the Wombat this financial year, yet their own Departmental documents (the Wood Utilization Plans) show a figure of 2,833 hectares to be logged. Their excuse? "Leeway in case of bad weather, and unfinished coupes from last year". We urgently need an independent judicial inquiry into the mismanagement of the Wombat Forest.

The nail in the coffin for export woodchipping from the Wombat Forest is this: 'D' and 'C' grade sawlogs are being woodchipped and shipped to Japan for paper bags, and the WFS has evidence of these practices. We are gathering and refining our evidence, and these unsustainable practices will bring the woodchippers undone in the near future. Now's the time to get involved to help save the Wombat — and this is the year to be able to say you helped make a difference.

Alan Gray, Director,
Wombat Forest Society Inc, Trentham.

"Cleaning up the waste", or ripping off our jobs and our forest?



Piles of straight, knot-free sawlogs on the Leonards Hill-South Bullarto Road ready to be carted off for woodchipping. Timber workers have identified many sawlogs among the pile, and responding to concerns from the Wombat Forest Society, DCNR has recently supervised regrading of this stockpile to extract sawlogs. If we keep our young trees in the ground we can provide jobs for our children, or habitat for our wildlife. If we send them to Japan for paper bags, no one benefits.

The Water-logged Wombat

The current rate of logging in the Wombat Forest has the potential to adversely affect vital water resources in Central Victoria.

The waters of six major river systems originate in the Wombat Forest, predominantly in the high rainfall headwaters which take up a relatively small area of the total catchment.

A well managed forest is one that is fully stocked with trees of all sizes and ages, with most of the growth in valuable older trees. No erosion should be evident, with stable roads laid on the land, not cut into it. The soil and the mulch layer should be intact. This forest becomes a vast reservoir of water that gradually seeps down through the earth and comes out in mountain springs. It is well documented that changing the age class of the forest by replacing older trees with young regrowth can affect water yield for 60 to 80 years.

Decreasing the stream flow from the Wombat Forest will adversely affect town water supplies, irrigation, and the environmental flows that dilute saline and polluted waters lower in the catchment.

In a large, recently burnt log coupe in an area of the Wombat Forest signposted as "Water Supply Catchment", the following devastation was witnessed: severe crown scorch on the majority of trees left standing; large blackened logs scattered about; no mandatory buffer zones or drainage lines to protect gullies; puddles filled with dank, heavily coloured water formed in many depressions left by heavy machinery.

This represents either an ignorance of, or a complete disregard for the water values of the area.

Unfortunately the highly subsidised timber industry has not been made accountable for the effects its activities have on the quality and quantity of our water supply, yet communities downstream are burdened with increasing costs for water entitlements. Our native timber resource is utilised for relatively small returns, without consideration of the full impact of these activities.

Maybe if our water authorities managed our high water production areas, instead of them being mismanaged by a government department with a strong focus on timber harvesting, we would see an appropriate emphasis on water quality and good catchment management.

Summary of a letter by Loris Duclos, of Kingston, reprinted courtesy of Watershed magazine.

Wombat Forest Society Calendar of Activities

Sept 18	**Tree Planting** - contact Baajan at the Rocklyn Ashram on (053) 457434.
20	**WFS Radio Show** 12.30pm on 3BBB 97.5FM.
22	**Woodend Rotary Club**
27	**WFS General Meeting** - see page 1.
Oct 5	**WFS Radio Show**, 1-2pm on 3BBB 97.5 FM.
29	**Ashram Meditation** ph (053) 457434.
Nov 1	**Talk** at Rotary Club, Daylesford. Contact Rotary.
2	**WFS Radio Show**, 1-2pm on 3BBB 97.5 FM.
4	**WFS Raffle** - Vincent St, Daylesford (& 18th, 19th, 25th and 26th of Oct.)

• And every Sunday the WFS conducts a stall at the Daylesford market with fact sheets, stickers, and collectable bric-a-brac for sale.

EDUCATION

Attention: teachers and parents

The WFS is working towards producing primary and secondary level school kits about woodchipping and management of the forest. School tours conducted by experienced members of the Society can also be arranged at short notice. The DCNR can also conduct tours on request to put forward the Department's current forest theory.

Wombat Forest Guardian

JUNE 1995. NUMBER FOUR. NEWSLETTER OF THE WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY INC. PO BOX 51 TRENTHAM, 3458.

Society Maps Out Campaign Steps For Next 12 Months

In the past four weeks the Society has held committee and general meetings to decide on the next 12 months' actions. The focus will remain on the need for:

- an urgent reduction in all timber harvesting in the Wombat Forest to sustainable levels in line with the Timber Industry Strategy,
- an end to high-intensity forestry operations such as the 'Shelterwood' system of pseudo-clearfelling and so-called 'regeneration' burns, and
- a comprehensive, independent flora and fauna survey of the forest.

"Within this broad framework, our committee is hard at work on many topics, including water catchment issues, employment programs to rehabilitate parts of the forest, submissions to Federal Government processes, educating people through our regular bus tours, preparing management options, considering electoral strategies, and highlighting the mismanagement of the forest," said WFS Director, Alan Gray.

"We've been through a period of reflection, and reassessment of our progress, and I get a sense that the committee is focussed strongly on the tasks at hand," he said.

Mr Gray said that he looks forward to strong support from members of the Society through a quick renewal of membership fees (due now for most members).

"I hope that most members will feel they've had their money's worth from the Society's year's work.

"If there's a renewal slip enclosed with this copy of the newsletter, I urge you to write a cheque right now and post it today, so we can keep up the work," he said.

Society's First AGM Successful

The Wombat Forest Society's First Annual General Meeting was held at the Daylesford Secondary College on 16 May. Committee member, Greg Morgan, presented an informative range of slides demonstrating various issues of concern to the Society in the forest, Tim Anderson discussed silviculture, rates of growth of trees in the forest, and future directions. Director, Alan Gray, reviewed the year's activities of the Society and discussed strategies for the next year's campaigning. The meeting proceeded with election of office bearers, and the new committee members are listed below. Accountant, Clem Mooney, of Trentham and South Melbourne, certified that he had audited the books of account of the Society and that all was in order.

After questions, supper, and informal chats, the Society closed the book on its first year, and ushered in the next.

OFFICE BEARERS OF THE WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY INC, 1995/6

Director: Alan T Gray

Joint Secretaries: Wendy Bone and Robin Ramsay

Treasurer: Karen Sandow, assisted by Greg Morgan

Committee: Monty Kirby, Tim Anderson, Loris Duclos, Helen Morningstar, Deborah Collings, Neil Wilson, Wendy Notley.

- *Clem Mooney, B. Com., M.B.A., C.P.A., kindly audited the books of account of the Society at no cost. Clem has an office in South Melbourne and at his home in Trentham, and he is available to discuss financial, tax or accounting matters at the following phone numbers: (054) 241 441 or (03) 9690 2177, 168 Gladstone St, South Melbourne, 3205.*

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The committee of the Wombat Forest Society meets every second Tuesday (sometimes every Tuesday!) evening at 7:30 PM at the old Daylesford courthouse (now the Neighbourhood Centre). MEETINGS FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS ARE: 13 & 27 JUNE, 11 & 25 JULY, 1 & 15 AUGUST. We'd love to see some new faces lend a hand on the many satisfying tasks confronting the Society. Leave a message on (053) 48 3632 to get involved now!

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YES MINISTER — IGNORE THE PEASANTS *(THEY ONLY LIVE THERE)*

Many months ago the Wombat Forest Society presented the following 9 point plan to the State Government committee charged with preparing a Management Plan for the Wombat Forest. The only reply we recieved was a bland assurance that community concerns would be considered, yet two years after this committee was formed, it has produced no research or documents of substance, and it is now nearly ten years since the State Timber Industry Strategy dictated that a Management Plan should be prepared for our forest.

This same committee (officially named the Midlands Forest Management Area Advisory Committee) also voted to exclude any Wombat Forest Society committee members from being on this committee, even though the Society represents more local poeple concerned about Wombat Forest management issues than any other group in the region.

WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY 9 POINT PLAN

The WFS believes the following management changes and actions are urgently required:

1. Abandonment of pseudo-clearfelling operations (called Shelterwood harvesting) and a return to selective falling to supply local sawmills.
2. Total exclusion of export woodchipping operations from the Wombat Forest.
3. A comprehensive flora and fauna survey which is independent of the Victorian Department of Conservation & Natural Resources.
4. Hydrological studies to determine the exact effect of *any* form of logging on downstream water quality and quantity.
5. Rare, threatened and endangered species to receive the same level of protection as is given in other parts of the State for the same species.
6. An urgent end to 'regeneration' burns after harvesting operations.
7. A return to the maximum levels of sawlog and pulpwood harvesting as specified in the Victorian Timber Industry Strategy.
8. A comprehensive study of the total economic value of all forest values, such as that proposed to the Federal Government's DEST by consultant economist, Frances Gray.
9. A judicial inquiry into the mismanagement of the Wombat Forest by the Victorian DCNR.

WORLD CLASS THEATRE HITS DAYLESFORD FOR THE FOREST

World-renowned actor, and Wombat Forest Society Secretary, Robin Ramsay, will be performing his new hit one-man play, *The Accidental Mystic*, at the Daylesford Town Hall on Saturday, 29 July this year, as a fundraiser for the Society.

Anyone who saw Robin perform *The Bastard From The Bush* last year at the Town Hall for The Society, will know that *now* is the time to reserve tickets. The capacity audience left the town hall last year after an utterly spellbinding performance, and *The Accidental Mystic* has just completed a Melbourne season at the CUB Malthouse Theatre before capacity crowds at each evening's performance, and to broad critical acclaim.

This is a rare opportunity to see world-class theatre in Daylesford at bargain basement prices. Robin, and his supporting musicians, will be donating all proceeds from the play to the Wombat Forest Society, in another generous gesture to follow from last year. *The Bastard From The Bush* proceeds allowed the Society to campaign throughout the vital lead-up to woodchip licence renewals last year, and this year's performance will be just as important for realising campaign objectives. **Tickets are available from the Daylesford Health Food Shop, or by mail from the Society at PO Box 51 Trentham, 3458. Adults:$12;concession:$10;delicious, gourmet supper: $3 on the night.**

Foresters Play God With Powerful Owl

by Wendy Bone
Secretary, WFS.

Thank you to all WFS members who phoned and wrote to the State Government about the powerful owl, or bought windcheaters and/or T-shirts. We had a significant win in January when we halted the logging and woodchipping at Coupe 13 near Bullarto where we believe the owl is roosting and has been heard calling on numerous occasions since the first week of March.

We were extremely excited in mid-May when we realised that another owl was answering the first owl's call, which means that he has found a mate, and will probably start nesting and raising young in the area during winter.

Suitable habitat trees large enough for the owl are extremely rare in the Wombat Forest and we have been most fortunate in finding 5 such suitable trees in Coupe 13. The State foresters have set aside 500 hectares of mostly degraded forest (ie forest that has been logged in the past 40 years).

We do not believe that this area will sustain the powerful owl family, so we must all continue to pressure the Department to provide the necessary 800 hectares of mature forest which they allow the owl in other parts of the State.

T-shirts are $16 each (sizes: small, medium, large and extra large), and windcheaters are $27 each (medium, large, extra large, and extra extra large) from PO Box 51 Trentham, 3458.

FOREST BUS TOUR TIMETABLE (3RD SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH): 18 JUNE, 16 JULY, 20 AUG, 17 SEPT, 15 OCT, 19 NOV, 17 DEC. RING (053) 48 3632 FOR BOOKINGS.

Wombat Forest Guardian

MAY 1995. NUMBER THREE. NEWSLETTER OF THE WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY INC. PO BOX 51 TRENTHAM, 3458.

Woodchip Court Case Proceeding Slowly

The legal challenge to the Federal Government's renewal of the export woodchip licence for the Wombat Forest is proceeding, despite technical difficulties which have kept the court case beyond newspaper headlines.

The Wombat Forest Society is working on the challenge with 'Environment Victoria', the Melbourne-based umbrella organisation for all Victorian groups opposed to export woodchipping, and which was formerly known as the Conservation Council Of Victoria.

"The Federal Government has deliberately avoided its legal obligations to prevent a speedy court case — possibly to frustrate us into abandoning the case," said WFS Director, Mr Alan Gray.

"We will not give up on this issue because it's too important to ignore. We cannot simply sit and home and stare at the fire while our forest and its wildlife are eliminated for short-term profits," he said.

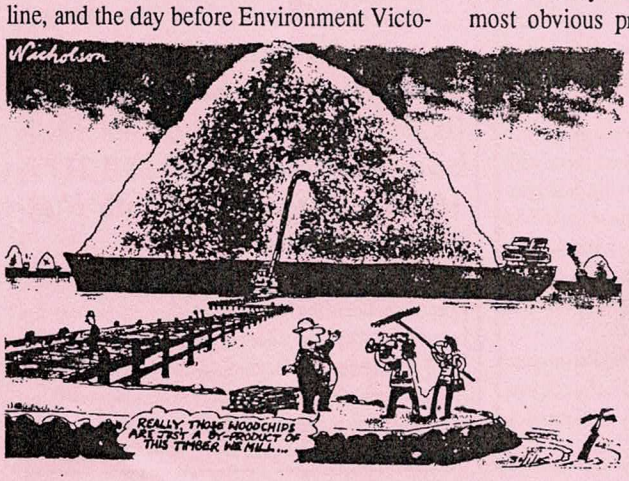
The court case could not proceed until Federal Resources Minister, Mr David Beddall, had provided his reasons for renewing the Wombat woodchip licence. Under the conditions of the Administrative Appeals (Judicial Review) Act, he was obliged to do this by 19 January — 28 days after the WFS lawyers wrote to him requesting his reasons. When the deadline arrived, he was in Italy.

Nearly three months after the deadline, and the day before Environment Victoria and the Wombat Forest Society were due to obtain a Federal Court judgement against Mr Beddall, he hurriedly provided his answers, and narrowly avoided having legal costs awarded against him.

"The next step in the court challenge process, is for us to sit down and carefully analyse a mountain of documents we've obtained under Freedom of Information laws to determine exactly what's relevant to our contention that Mr Beddall did not adequately consider the environmental impacts when he renewed the licence in the Wombat. We are awaiting a decision from the Australian Democrats on whether they will grant us $3000 from their Woodchip Legal Fighting Fund to pay for obtaining these documents from the federal Government. If they do, we will study the documents and we have a directions hearing in the Federal Court on 20 June in Melbourne to map out a timetable for hearing the court case."

"Our aim with the court case is to overturn the woodchip licence so that no export woodchipping can continue in the Wombat until an Environmental Impact Study has been completed. We are certain that an impartial Environmental Impact Study will show that the current level of all types of timber harvesting in the Wombat is unsustainable and must be corrected urgently," said Mr Gray. Export woodchipping is the most obvious problem, but removing this alone will not fix the problem in the Wombat. The total solution includes:

- ending the destructive 'regeneration' burns after logging,
- ending high-intensity, pseudo-clearfelling methods, which destroy vast tracts of forest in one hit,
- proper provision for flora and fauna protection, and
- considering water catchment and tourism values.



Society's First AGM

All Wombat Forest Society members and supporters are urged to attend the first Annual General Meeting of the Society on Tuesday, 16 May at the Daylesford Technical College in Smith Street, at 7:30 PM. The evening will be an opportunity to learn more about the workings of the Society, and to learn more about the forest by talking with local experts on the Society's committee. Committee members include field naturalists and local wildlife experts who have lived in and around the forest all their lives, as well as people who have been timber workers in the Wombat for many years.

The evening will include a slide presentation and talk by committee member, Greg Morgan of Musk, who has been assembling an impressive array of slides from various sources. Greg recently represented the Society at a woodchipping forum in Ballarat, attended by over 200 people, and his slides were very well received.

Supper will be provided and we would love to see as many members and supporters as possible.

If undeliverable, please return to:
WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY INC.
PO BOX 51 TRENTHAM, VIC, 3458.

POSTAGE PAID AUSTRALIA

"JOBS NOT WOODCHIPS FOR THE WOMBAT FOREST"

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Bus Tours Huge Success

The Society's Sunday afternoon bus tours of the Wombat Forest have proved to be an outstanding success. At the time of writing two fortnightly tours had been conducted by the Society, and both were well attended. People on the tours were enthusiastic about the afternoon, and many plan to return with friends on future tours. The bus tours will now be held on the third Sunday of every month, departing from opposite the Daylesford Post Office at 1:30 PM, and returning to the same spot by 5:00 PM.

Each tour includes afternoon billy tea and homemade cakes and biscuits at a picnic spot in the forest around a campfire, and the cost represents spectacular value for money when compared to similar commercial half day tour operations in other forests.

The tours are guided by experienced locals, wildlife experts and former timber workers. Please encourage your friends (especially any "doubting Thomas's") to go on a bus tour and see for themselves what's happening in the Wombat. The tours are also a chance to learn about the pretty parts of the forest which you can revisist for picnics and bushwalks.

Tickets are: $12.00 per adult, $9.00 concession, or $24.00 per family (two adults and two children), and are available from the Daylesford Health Food Shop (no phone bookings). For more information about the tours you can phone (053) 48 3632, or (053) 45 7521. Tickets are also available by mail from the WFS at PO Box 51 Trentham, 3458.

BUS TOUR TIMETABLE FOR 1995 (3RD SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH):
21 MAY, 18 JUNE, 16 JULY, 20 AUG, 17 SEPT, 15 OCT, 19 NOV, 7 DEC..

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS NEARLY DUE

Fees for membership of the Wombat Forest Society will be due after June 30 this year, and with all renewals this year we hope to be sending out membership cards. We hope that membership cards will be useful in the future for discounts on events organised by the Society, and for purchases from selected supporting businesses throughout the region.

When you receive your membership renewal notice in the next month, please renew as quickly as possible. Membership fees form the backbone of our finances, and allow us to build on them with fundraising events. We hope that members will feel that their fees have been well spent in the past year. Special mention must be made of several individuals whose fundraising efforts have been spectacular and vital to campaigning in the past year. Robin Ramsay of Musk, our joint secretary, gave us a spectacular boost with his one-man play, 'The Bastard From The Bush' last July. John Eathorne of Hepburn created and raffled a superb painting for the Society, and Tim Cole of Blackwood organised two hugely successful music benefits by 'The Killjoys' for the Society.

Thank you to all three and to the many other committee people (like Sab De Cato, Don Partington, Vic Dolby, Monty Kirby, Wendy Bone and others) who staffed the Sunday market stall before it was replaced by the bus tours, and sold donated goods. The committee has certainly made every dollar stretch as far as possible, and we look forward to the highest possible rate of membership renewals.

Local Accountant Assists Society With Books

Trentham resident and Certified Practising Accountant, Mr Clem Mooney, B. Com., M.B.A, C.P.A, has generously agreed to audit the books of account of the Society in preparation for the Annual General Meeting on 16 May. All the Society's financial and membership records are fully computerised on a Macintosh system using a program called 'Mind Your Own Business', and generating financial reports of any kind is straightforward.

For any financial, tax or accounting advice, Clem can be contacted at his home office on (054) 241 441, or at his Melbourne office on (03) 690 2177, 168 Gladstone St, South Melbourne, 3205.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The committee of the Wombat Forest Society meets every second Tuesday (sometimes every Tuesday!) evening at 7:30 PM at the old Daylesford courthouse (now the Neighbourhood Centre). We'd love to see some new faces lend a hand on the many satisfying tasks confronting the Society. Get involved now!