29th Aug 1994

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION & NATURAL RESOURCES
Ballarat

Your Ref:
Our Ref: 05-90-0076 (Andrew Maclean)

29 August, 1994

Mr Alan Gray
Wombat Forest Society
PO Box 51
Trentham 3458

Dear Mr Gray,

The Midlands Forest Management Area Advisory Committee has asked me to thank you for attending their meeting of July 15. The Committee is keen to ensure it is aware of the full range of community views on forest management and your attendance contributed to this.

At the August 26 meeting, the Committee discussed the audio tape made of your presentation to the Committee. The Committee passed the following motion:

> *"That the Committee endorses the actions of the Chairperson in relation to not providing the tape to the Wombat Forest Society and that a copy of the tape of the discussion with the Wombat Forest Society not be provided to the Wombat Forest Society to avoid comments by the Wombat Forest Society or the Midlands Forest Management Area Advisory Committee being taken out of context."*

The motion was carried unanimously. I understand that the member for whom the tape was prepared intends to destroy the recording.

In lieu of provision of the tape, the Committee has requested that I provide you with a copy of the minutes of the July 15 meeting. These were accepted as a true and correct record on August 26.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Maclean

Andrew Maclean
Executive Officer
Midlands Forest Management Area Advisory Committee

STATE PUBLIC OFFICES, CNR MAIR & DOVETON STREETS, BALLARAT VICTORIA 3402
TELEPHONE: (053) 33 6782 FACSIMILE: (053) 33 6713

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Midlands Forest Management Area Advisory Committee (FMAAC)

Meeting 8
State Government Offices
Cnr Mair and Doveton Sts, Ballarat
Friday, July 15 1994 at 1.00 pm

The meeting opened at 1:15 p.m.

Present:

Geoff Proctor	David Endacott	Suzanne Mearns
Ron Liversidge	Joanne Cuthbert	Steven Bulmer
Andrew Maclean	Frank Woodward	Peter Tange (minutes)
Martin Westbrooke (chairperson)	Gary Morgan	Pamela Manning

8.1 Apologies

Frank Moulds	John Knowles
Leo Violini	Michael Alston

8.2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting
Moved: Joanne Cuthbert
Seconded: Suzanne Mearns
That the minutes of the previous meeting were a true and correct record

CARRIED

8.3 Matters Arising

Nil matters arising from the previous meeting

8.4 Public Consultation Update
Wombat Forest Society
Martin Westbrooke invited representatives of the Wombat Forest Society (WFS) to attend and talk to the Advisory Committee on their concerns in relation to the management of the Wombat State Forest. This follows extensive media coverage of the concerns they have raised over the last six weeks.

Daylesford Council tour of the Wombat State Forest with the WFS
The Daylesford Council (including advisory committee members Ron Liversidge and Pamela Manning) toured with the WFS members Alan Gray and Bill McCashney. The Council will write to the Minister of Natural Resources and Premier Kennett highlighting the concerns of the Council on the management of the Wombat State Forest.

Australian Conservation Foundation tour of the Wombat Forest
David Endacott informed the Advisory Committee members of a tour with John Lawrence and other members of the Ballarat Branch of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). The tour examined various aspects of forest management including the shelterwood silvicultural system, regrowth, integrated harvesting and value adding. The tour concluded at a sawmill.

8.5 Presentation by representatives of the Wombat Forest Society (Alan Gray and Tim Anderson).

Martin Westbrooke introduced Alan Gray (Director - WFS) and Tim Anderson. He explained the role of the Advisory Committee and asked each member to introduce themselves and provide background on their role on the committee. Martin Westbrooke asked Alan Gray if the presentation could be taped for a member of the committee who was unable to attend. Alan Gray agreed and requested a copy of the tape.

Alan Gray introduced himself and Tim Anderson and explained the background to the WFS. He presented the concerns of the Society and discussed these issues with the Advisory Committee. The main points that were raised and a brief description of the issue are (not listed in order):

- *Flora and Fauna Values*

Alan Gray proposed that protection of species in one part of the State means that it deserves the same protection as anywhere else in the State. The example of treatment of the Barking and Powerful Owls in the East Gippsland Management plan was given. Alan Gray stated that this plan provided a reserve of 800-1000ha of mature forest per pair.

Martin Westbrooke noted that wildlife population numbers are not static and that a balance needs to be struck to ensure minimal impact of forest activities. He added that the plan would moderate the needs of harvesting to meet the requirement for flora and fauna protection. He added however that the level of protection overall will not be as great as that offered in National or State Park.

Alan Gray noted that there was a lack of wildlife corridors, filter strips were not protected from burning and that habitat trees were not retained in the Wombat State Forest. Martin Westbrooke added that a system of Wildlife Corridors will be put in place as an outcome of the Management Plan. Alan Gray stated that CNR FFG Officer said that no pre logging surveys have been done since 1973 and thus CNR has no understanding of the impact that forest operations have on them.

- *Sustainable Level of Harvest*

Alan Gray noted that the CNR only calculates sustainable yield based on sawlog production. No figure available for total biomass growth. Alan Gray presented the CNR Wood Utilisation Plan (WUP) 1993/94 and stated that this showed that the Department intended to harvest over 2300 ha and produce over 90,000m3 of sawlogs from the Wombat State Forest. Alan Gray stated that coupes from the 1994/95 year

have been brought forward and thus shows that CNR is cutting in advance. Frank Woodward noted that this figure of 90,000m3 had never been harvested from the Midlands FMA. Alan Gray also noted that he believed that the level of sawlog harvest did not need to be reduced but that the level of harvest of other products (pulpwood and E grade) needed to be reduced.

- *Code of Forest Practice Breaches*

Alan stated that every coupe in the Wombat State contained breaches. He cited failure to leave habitat trees and the burning of filter strips.

- *Shelterwood not working*

Alan Gray stated shelterwood was not working because a Midlands Logging Company document obtained by the WFS showed that the intended harvest volumes were greater than the actual volumes harvested. Suzanne Mearns noted that a quote in *THE AGE* attributed to him stated that the review of shelterwood was undertaken because it was not working. Suzanne Mearns added that a review was requested by some members of the committee. In response to Alan Gray, Suzanne Mearns noted because you are examining or reviewing something does necesarily mean that it does not work.

Subsequently it was noted by Geoff Proctor that some of the figures tabled by Alan Gray were not from completed coupes. The E grade volume listed as available may not be taken as this was dependant on demand. Geoff Proctor also noted that the estimated harvest yields in the table are separate from the sustainable yield estimates.

- *Employment*

Alan Gray noted that WFS is concerned that at the rate of harvest that there will not be any jobs for sawmillers and firewood cutters in twenty years

- *Catchment Protection*

Alan Gray stated that there was an area of forest harvested in water catchment above the Wombat Reservoir. Tim Anderson reffered to a 1968 research paper which showed that logging increased the level of soluble salts in streams. Alan Gray stated that the Kerang Branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation was concerned about over logging in the Catchment from which they derive their water supply. Alan Gray also said that any harvesting more intensive than a single tree selection system will cause an increase in salt levels downstream.

- *WFS representatives on the FMAAC*

At the conclusion of his presentation Alan Gray asked the committee to consider recommending to the Minister that the WFS be allowed to have two members sit on the Advisory Committee because they represent 350 concerned members and residents of the Wombat forest area.

Martin Westbrooke explained that the committee was made up of people who represented issues rather than interest groups but that the committee would discuss whether it would recommend WFS representatives to join the Advisory Committee.

Martin Westbrooke thanked Alan Gray and Tim Anderson for their attendance and the presentation of the concerns of the WFS. He explained that the FMAAC would discuss the issues they had raised.

8.6 Discussion of the issues raised.

Martin Westbrooke and Andrew Maclean noted the important issues that were raised by the WFS presentation. Martin Westbrooke commented on the wide media coverage that the WFS had generated and the level of misinformation that was apparent. The discussion and/or conclusions of the FMAAC are contained under the following points;

- *Flora and Fauna Values*

The committee discussed the application of management actions for flora and fauna conservation in the State. It noted the development of hollows was age dependant and that this had significant implications in regrowth forests such as the Wombats. The choice of suitable habitat trees was discussed and highlighted that retention of clumps of trees provided better habitat than isolated trees on a coupe. It was added that should be clearly defined and protected. Pamela Manning noted that this worked well with small coupes as opposed to large coupes.

- *Sustainable Yield*

Earlier in the meeting the rate of annual harvesting in the Wombat Forest was discussed. Gary Morgan highlighted that over the past four years the annual harvesting rate in the Wombat Forest was approximately 1160 hectares a year. This was made up of Shelterwood one and two and seed tree/clearfell areas. He added that about half of this area was made up of shelterwood two harvests. He further explained that the area harvested is not the crucial determinate of sustainable yield as the yield of sawlogs per hectare varies over the forest[1].

The CNR WUP referred to by Alan Gray contains contingency coupes and the actual sawlog harvest is in the order of about 68,000 m3 D+ sawlogs and not the 90,000m3 claimed by Alan Gray to be the actual amount to be harvested. Martin Westbrooke stated that the issues of Sustainable Yield and Shelterwood were important and would need be addressed by the Committee in detail.

Andrew Maclean informed the committee that Peter Tange had been working on the sawlog sustainable yield estimates over the last 3 months and that the figures were

[1] Note that the revised Wood Utilisation Plan which distinguishes between the base schedule, contingency coupes and coupes that allow for licencees harvesting in excess of 100% to 130% is enclosed.

being finalised. These would be presented to the committee when complete. He stressed that the Department must ensure it has confidence in any information released to minimise unwarrented speculations about sustainable yield.

- *Shelterwood not a suitable Sivicultural System*

Martin Westbrooke noted that the mature Wombat forest is a result of clearfelling last century. Peter Tange added that selection cutting up to 1974 was a thinning treatment rather than a system designed for the establishment of regeneration.

- *Committee Membership*

The committee discussed Alan Gray's request that they recommend to the Minister that two members of the WFS be added to the Advisory Committee. Members noted that all of the issues raised by the WFS had already been recognised by the Committee and that it is able to represent the issues related the Wombat Forest.

- *Catchment Protection*

Andrew Maclean noted that salinity problems at Kerang cannot be reasonably linked to management of forests in the upper Loddon. He stressed however, that water quality remains an important issue for the plan.

- *Employment*

The committee noted that the issue of employment is to be addressed in the plan. Peter Tange will follow up through the Midlands Logging Company employment figures for the various parts of the harvesting through to processing of timber from the Midlands FMA. The figures collected should include estimates of the proportion of employment attributable to the lower grade material.

- *CNR Public Relations*

The committee discussed whether a press release was appropriate and the form that it should take. It was concluded that it was appropriate and should:

1. Update the public on the status of the plan;
2. Note that the WFS was invited to address its concerns with the FMAAC; and
3. Invite other interested groups to highlight other areas of concern to the FMAAC.

8.7 Nature Conservation Paper

Andrew Maclean went through the summary of the Nature Conservation Paper he provided to Advisory Committee members with the agenda of Meeting 8. Six members of the Committee requested the full paper which will be sent with the minutes of the meeting.

8.8 Next meeting

The next meeting will be at 1.00 p.m. on the 26 August 1994 at the State Government Offices (cnr Mair and Doveton Streets, Ballarat).