# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1st Februrary, 2002

To the Editor,

I would like to reply Marcus Ward's proposal for a Queensland RFA style plantation transition for the timber industry of the region. It disappoints me that any one or any organisation that purports to be concerned about the environment would suggest emulating the Queensland agreement. The Queensland agreement has some appalling environmental aspects as well as being set within an entirely different set of circumstance. The Queensland Agreement has seen the Queensland Conservation Council and the Wilderness Society sign off on unsustainable logging. Under this agreement, in order to conserve high conservation areas, regrowth forests such as the Wombat have been given to the timber industry to completely cut out over a 25-year period.

In a State that has out of control native vegetation clearance, the agreement has no conditions that prevent such clearance for the establishment of the industrial plantations. Queensland has an enormous plantation resource coming on-line. Projections are that thatthe plantation output will increase from 240 000m3pa to just under 1 million tonnes in a decade. The Victorian scenario is quite different. Our plantations have been sold off under the previous Liberal Government and are now controlled by the US company Hancocks.

A report produced by economist Judy Clarke 6 years ago suggested that Victoria had enough plantations to supply our needs. This was a desktop report that failed to look at the silvicultural management of the existing plantations, and made predictions on what would be established by the year 2000. A review of the inventory and the predictions finds the report wanting.
Most of the plantations that have been established are for woodchipping, specific silvicultural management would have been needed in order for these plantings become sawlogs.

It concerns me that the plan Marcus has previously put forward relies on an industrial style management to produce timber volumes that are far from environmentally acceptable. These plantations use herdicides, pesticides and fertilisation cocktails, are targeted in high rainfall areas that are in fact our freshwater recharge zones are comprised on non-local species.

They are logged in climactic clearfell methods, and the final wood needs toxic chemical treatment in order to be durable. In the US timber treated with these chemicals are now being banned in children's playgrounds. Over fifteen environment groups, including the Wombat Forest Society have recently formulated a set of plantation principles aimed at full social and environmental accountability.

I believe that we need to be actually putting back the forests and woodlands that previous generations have removed so that our children and their children will be able to use good durable hardwoods taken selectively from restored native forest. Lets not go down the same road that gave us cane toads and prickly pears, shortsighted reactions to one environmental problem (the rampart overlogging of the Wombat and the failure of NRE to heed legitimate community concerns) with another problem.

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Marcus talks of the failure of the current State Government to listen to his/their scheme, yet he fails to mention the West RFA Sawlog Farming Project, that both he and I are on. This project is to supply 150 000m3 pa of hardwood sawlogs, in this region from hardwood plantings that are also sighted to repair environmental degradation, salinity and biodiversity. Regrettably, Marcus has been noticeably absent from meetings for this project for a considerable time.

It is disappointing that Marcus spends so much energy knocking everything in his way, yet when given the opportunity to contribute and implement plans similar to his own, he fails to attend. Is his agenda really the environment or his own personal goals?

For Marcus's information, the six year Wombat Forest Society campaign has seen the volumes of sawlog and woodchips taken from the Midlands halved from 5 years ago, with more substantial cuts to be announced soon. Engaging within the democratic process clearly brings about greater change than perpetually standing on the outside throwing stones.

Tim Anderson
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2002

To the Editor,

It disturbs me no end to read Marcus Ward's comments in the Advocate last week in relation to his and CAWFAG's plans for the Wombat.

Quote "Given that unsustainable, destructive logging has been going on for the past 150 years, a further decade or two of unsustainable logging.... seems a reasonable compromise." Marcus Ward. Advocate 13 February.

This community, including conservationist and the timber industry, have been fighting the unsustainable logging of the Wombat for over a decade. For Marcus, who stood as a Green candidate in the recent Federal Election, to persist in his sanctioning of this unacceptable situation clearly ends his credibility as an environmentalist.

Marcus's comments reinforce my objection to the Queensland RFA Agreement. Federal and State legislation requires nothing other than sustainable logging rates. The Wombat Forest Society has successfully campaigned for sustainable logging rates without the need for compromise.

My question is to the other member groups of the Wombat Forest Alliance , 'Do you sanction Marcus's comments, that you would accept unsustainable logging rates for 10-20 years?' By my estimates there is no way that this could be done within Mr Ward's context of "a further decade or two of unsustainable logging, while protecting the most important values". The rate of overlogging has been so extensive that to allow it continue will detrimentally impact on almost every non-timber value in the Wombat.

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