WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY INC. PO BOX 51 TRENTHAM, 3458

MEDIA RELEASE

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Satellite Image Unmasks Woodchipping Shame

The Wombat Forest Society today publicly unveiled a satellite image of the Wombat Forest and surrounding districts which conclusively proves that the forest is being unsustainably logged.

The satellite image was taken on 26 November last year on a cloudless day, and the Society has spent the past three months working with the State Data Centre in Ballarat to refine the image.

"This satellite image proves that all year the State Government has been covering up the true nature of the destruction of our forest," said Wombat Forest Society Director, Mr Alan Gray.

The satellite image shows that forest blocks clearfelled in the past nine years account for well over 30 percent of the entire 39,000 hectare forest.

Mr Gray said this meant that in the 20 years since clearfelling and woodchipping had taken a grip in the Wombat that more than two-thirds of the entire forest had been logged out.

"This means that allowing for another 350 football fields of forest which have been logged in the ten months since this satellite image was taken, we have only a few years left of timber harvesting. The Federal Government must urgently protect local sawmill jobs by cancelling the export woodchip licences of the Geelong-based woodchipper, Midway Wood Products. We urgently need a judicial inquiry into the mismanagement of the Wombat because this satellite image proves that the State Government can't come clean with Victorians about the level of woodchipping they allow," he said.

The Society also revealed that the huge stockpile of logs ready for woodchipping at Leonards Hill in the Wombat, which was extensively photographed several months ago at the launch of the Society's campaign, has recently been pulled apart. Many sawlogs were extracted and sent to sawmills instead of their original destination — a woodchip mill.

"This action by the Government is a guilty acknowledgement that unless we'd kicked up a fuss, they'd have happily allowed those sawlogs to be woodchipped," said Mr Gray.

Mr Gray said that the Society is delighted by commitments for action by local Federal MHR, Mr Neil O'Keefe, who viewed the satellite image last week and spoke to local timber workers after touring the forest with members of the Society.

"We are hopeful that this is the last year Midway and the DCNR will be able to get away with massacring our forest," said Mr Gray.

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