A critic

The Wombat Forest Society's recent criticisms of the management of the Wombat Forest reveal an ideology and agenda being foisted on the Midlands by the Wilderness Society through its emissary Alan Gray.

Alan Gray seems to be the driving force of the society.

He has seized on the concern of some local people that the allowable sawlog cut is too high and nonsustainable; he has pretended to "research" and "triple check" Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' statistical information, added in a liberal portion of anti-wood chip propaganda, and concocted an alarming scenario which beggars belief.

He has failed to acquaint himself with the long history of the Wombat Forest.

This history demonstrates clearly to us, firstly nature's tremendous resilience, and secondly the responsible stewardship of the forest authority throughout this century and especially post-World War Two.

I'm sure he believes the forest's history commenced when he came to live in Trentham.

His promotion of antagonism to pulpwood harvesting (called woodchipping for emotive reasons) highlights clearly his intent to make the Wombat Forest Society a surrogate in the Midlands of the Wilderness Society.

His alleged "research" is laughable.

The figures he quotes misrepresent the real situation and expose his ignorance of the subject matter and his simplistic misinterpretation of the information he has been given.

The relationship between harvested sawlog volumes and pulpwood volumes is a complicated matter and deserves better than the facile treatment given to it by the Wombat Forest Society. Sawlogs have for over 50 years been the primary product from this forest, and pulpwood and firewood, etc. have been and always will be secondary.

Alan Gray is very naughty in blending the figures for sawlogs and secondary products together.

In statistics one must keep apples entirely separate from oranges!

Computations of sustainable sawlog cuts provide the significant base figures, and pulpwood availability flows from those figures in projected ratios.

There is also a complicating factor which has tripped up Alan Gray — the backlog of pulpwood availability arising from the lack of pulpwood demand in years gone by.

As regards areas logged per year, the two-stage logging which is part and parcel of the Shelterwood System made it inevitable that Alan Gray's careless use of figures would lead him into double accounting errors.

This flaw in his "research" was mentioned by Jim Blain, of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in the Daylesford Advocate recently.

In the course of his inquiries, Allan Gray should have learnt that a periodic review by the department of the Wombat sustainable cut is under way at present.

It would be more appropriate (and more civilized) if the Wombat Forest Society could wait patiently for this review to be completed and then if necessary, to pursue its concerns through the area advisory committee, which was set up last year to be the link between the department and Midlands communities.

N. D. Endacott,
Barbers Rd.,
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Facts?

To the Editor —

So is the Wombat State Forest being managed in a sustainable way?

A lot of people in the district have had an uneasy feeling in their stomachs at the number of trucks taking Wombat trees to be chipped.

For those who get out into the forest the same feeling is invoked at the size and number of cut out areas.

Added to this are concerns over management practices that poison the surviving peppermints in logged coups, because the darker wood of the peppermint woods do not make the paper bags and computer paper, made from our chips, as white.

Coups which have failed regeneration and regeneration so thick you could lie on it.

In the latest debate, the same old scenario is being played out.

Figures on the Wombat are sourced and cross-checked with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (Daylesford office, Ballarat Regional office and Melbourne) when these figures are analysed and quantified into an equation that confirms local fears the Wombat is being harvested in what appears to be an unsustainable way, the department trots out it's standard response:

"You've got the wrong figures and you don't know what your are talking about."

It begs the question, if the figures are wrong, what's the agenda of the department if they are supplying "we, the public" with false figures?

Facts and figures tend to be an esoteric way of looking at the picture, anyway.

There is an even more conclusive way of us all seeing with our own two eyes the truth.

There is in our community at present a 1992 Landsat image of the shire.

It quite clearly shows the cut out coups and can even roughly date when it was cut.

Now on department estimates this forest takes at least 80 years to regenerate.

That means every 10 years a total of 12 per cent of the forest should be cut if it is to be logged in a sustainable way.

Unfortunately the 1992 Landsat image only shows the Daylesford and Glenlyon Shire.

A February, 1994, photo is available of the whole Wombat Forest.

It will cost between $1000 and $2000.

The Wombat Forest Society has committed itself to buying this image and making it available to the public to see with our own eyes how much forest is left.

If it is being cut at a sustainable rate it should show approximately 4800 hectares cut over the last 10 years.

Let's find out.

It is not being logged sustainable, then it will not be us who loses out — it will be our kids.

T. Anderson,
Daylesford.