13/8/1999

Letter to the Editor.

Re: Age August 12 1999 (Row Flares over Logging Audit). It is too late for Mrs. Tehan to be furious over the Federal Minister for Forests and Conservation's appointment of two respected forest scientists to investigate the sustainability of the Wombat Forest.

Mrs. Tehan had the opportunity to answer the concerns of the Wombat Forest Society and the local sawmillers of the region with the letter we signed last year. It took six months for Mrs Tehan to reply to this letter and the response was of such an appalling standard that we where left questioning the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's ability or intent in doing its job.

In May this year the WFS produced a detailed report that proves that the DNRE's sustainability numbers do not add up and that there is less than 15 years timber in the Wombat Forest. This will not only cost timber jobs but impact on Western Melbourne's future water and the region's booming tourism industry. In May a commitment was made by Ian Miles (DNRE) to respond fully to this report, with a whole department at their disposal, we have had no reply and I am told that DNRE are unable to dis-prove our conclusions.

The extent of harvesting in the Wombat over the last twenty years means that the next generation will miss out. The Wombat Forest Society condemns such poor forest planning, morally we cannot let Mrs Tehan and her department now cover up its mistakes.

Before Mr. Kennett calls the State election, he should have a look at the appalling mess our forest is in and Mrs Tehan's failure to listen to a whole community's cries over the Wombat. Mr. Kennett's anointed successor may fail to win the Seat of Gisborne, due to Mrs Tehan's inability to handle yet another portfolio.

At least the Federal Government has seen the necessity to carry out a long called for audit into the sustainability of all values, timber and non-timber, in the Wombat Forest.

Tim Anderson
President. Wombat Forest Society
[redacted].
13 August 1999