

*This terrific letter and photos has been sent by TCA member Peter Rutherford to NSW MP's in light of the Greens recent call to ban logging of native forests. It is an example of proactive action for the long-term protection of the industry.*

**Subject:** Somerset Email re MOTION BY LEE RHIANNON to End to logging for woodchips and proposed biomass burner in SE NSW.

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

Following up on the email you have recently received from Bronte Somerset (see bottom of document), I hope you find the following information of interest.

Several years ago, I stood in a peat swamp rainforest in central Sumatra, home to orang-utans and Sumatran tigers. The pictures are 2 of the many photographs I took. The peat swamp (right) had been drained, the forest logged (below) and the site was soon to be planted with acacia plantations.



I have also attached a more recent photo (right) of the (Gnupa) forest featured in Ms Somerset's photo. The site has begun to regenerate with yellow and white stringy bark and silvertop ash seedlings 30 to 60 cm in height. I expect, based on past experience, the regenerated forest will be suitable for inclusion in the local parks system before I die.



**BUT THE ISSUE IS NOT WHO HAS THE BEST OR WORST COLLECTION OF PHOTOS, be it Ms Somerset, any other activist or timber industry employee, or me.**

Most people find recently harvested forests to be visually unattractive. The big difference between many of the forests in Indonesia and those of Australia is that the Australian forests

are regenerated, the wildlife returns and when harvesting occurs in future decades, protection of biodiversity will be an issue because it is still there. The same cannot be said for millions of hectares of tropical forests cleared for oil palm and pulpwood plantations.

For too long, Australia has burdened the forests of the third world with a disproportionate share of the impacts of our consumption. Ms Somerset seeks your support in continuing to shift this impact.

The time has come for all Australian governments to make some serious decisions about the maintenance of biodiversity.

### **Back Ground**

The harvesting of native forests in Australia has been increasingly demonised over the past 40 years. As a result of public concern, there have been a substantial increase in the areas of parks and reserves, particularly over the past 20 years, with a consequent wind down in the native forest based industry.

At the same time as the area of parks and reserves has increased, the population and geographic spread of many native species, for example the koalas, have continued to decline.

**Flashback - 1890 - 1920:** Politicians in NSW and other Australian states recognised that unbridled conversion of crown forested land to freehold title and uncontrolled exploitation of native forests for timber would present long-term social, economic and environmental disruption. The actions of those politicians resulted in the dedication of forested areas for long term timber production, the dedication of the first national parks and the introduction of management of timber harvesting on crown land. Generally uncontrolled clearing of native forests on private property was to continue for another 80 - 90 years.

**1990 - 2000:** The major conservation initiatives revolved around the development and implementation of the Regional Forests Agreements (RFAs). These agreements have given Australia a forested reserves system well in advance of most other nations.

**2000 - 2010:** The area of parks and reserves have continued to expand beyond those established under the RFAs. The number of species on the verge of extinction has continued to grow.

**2010 - 2020:** Unless there is a fundamental shift in approach to biodiversity conservation by all governments, the focus will remain on seeking a "peace in our time" solution by shuffling forested areas from one land tenure to another, with some form of compensation to affected stakeholders.

### **Comment**

The email from Ms Somerset highlights that anti forestry groups continue to run very simple and appealing marketing campaigns. Opposition to biomass plants using native forest processing waste is just another tool to sway public opinion. Simple messages are far easier to sell in the public domain than the boring science of long-term forest management.

Bioenergy, with the majority of the biomass sourced from native forests, is now the main source of heat for semi-detached and detached houses in Sweden. In 2008 more than half

the energy used for heating and hot water came from bioenergy. The International Energy Association estimates that by 2030 15% of world primary energy will come from biomass compared to 9% for other renewable energy sources.

Globally, between 70 & 80% of all forest products are still sourced from native forests.

Anyone who has looked at a book on Australian birds, mammals and/or reptiles (No local activists that I have spoken to admit to doing this) would know that the extinctions and major declines in biodiversity are generally associated with our agricultural and arid interior landscapes.

This might suggest to more enlightened observers that the harvesting of native forests is not the root cause of the major biodiversity decline in Australia. However, the Greens and the country's leading antforestry groups gain significant power, influence and revenue from the perpetuation of this myth. Perpetuating this myth allows politicians to show green credentials by transferring state forests to national park to "save" the last etc etc. Paying tens of millions to shut down the native forest industry in the affected area is a pittance compared to the billions of dollars needed to fix the real biodiversity problems that we face.

For example, the Institute of Foresters of Australia unsuccessfully lobbied state and federal governments in the 1970s for more water for the Murray red gum forests. The recent gazettal of these forests has not addressed the underlying issues of too many trees (compared to pre European forest structure) and not enough water at the right time. Currently, the most severely stressed forests are in those red gum forests "saved" in earlier decades.

A current "icon" species in the SE NSW forests is the koala. If increasing the parks and the reserve system is the answer to saving this species, why is it the over the last 20 years or so, the area of parks and reserves has more than doubled, while the number of koalas has plummeted to as few as 40,000 individuals in Australia. The answer is that native forest harvesting does not threaten this species and simply stopping native forest harvesting will not stop the population decline. A co-ordinated revegetation plan, integrated with existing land uses, for the Bega Valley would restore the original red gum woodland core habitat for the remnant Mumbulla/Murrah koala population and help disperse the risk of the local population being wiped out by the next 5,000ha plus wildfire. Wildfire is actually the biggest threat to the small koala populations scattered around SE NSW, yet this fact is lost in the green campaigning against native forest harvesting.

Please feel free to contact me by return email if you would like to follow up on any issue that I have raised.

PS While this email is sent on the South East Fibre Exports email system and I am the Forestry Manager at SEFE, the views expressed in this email are my personal views and not the views of the company. This email and most of the material I put forward in the media are prepared in my own time and out of my interest to see our forests and the creatures they shelter survive in the long-term, as well as to challenge Australian consumers to accept that we shoulder a fair share of the impact of our growing forest products consumption.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.

Peter Rutherford.

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**From:** Bronte Somerset [mailto:[bjsomerset@gmail.com](mailto:bjsomerset@gmail.com)]

**To:** <Removed>

**Subject:** MOTION BY LEE RHIANNON to End to logging for woodchips and proposed biomass burner in SE NSW.

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

I recently stood horrified in the remains of Gnupa State Forest NSW, and took this photograph.

It had been savagely logged by Forests NSW for woodchips.

This is what is happening to the carbon storing forests of SE NSW.

I note that you voted against protecting the Forests of SE NSW yesterday.

This means that you **VOTED FOR** this type of devastation to continue.

If this was happening in your backyard would you want it stopped immediately?

If your children ask "Why have the forests been chopped down?" what are you going to tell them?

I beseech you to find out about what is happening here.

Please listen to the Members who represent hundreds of young and old residents from all parties who want the logging to stop.

Yours faithfully,

Bronte Somerset

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