

May 2004

Doctors For Forests' Response to "Towards a New Silviculture in Tasmania's Public Oldgrowth Forests"

Doctors For Forests would like to comment upon the papers produced by Forestry Tasmania "*Towards a New Silviculture in Tasmania's Public Oldgrowth Forests*". We appreciate that moving away from old-growth forests is a complex issue and that much work is required, but we feel that these papers have failed to address some important issues or to fully examine what has occurred in other jurisdictions. **In summary, Doctors For Forests believe firstly, that what is most striking about these papers is not what's in them, but rather, what's not in them.**

We also strongly believe that such an analysis of the future direction of public forests should have been prepared by a fully independent expert body, at arm's length from the political arguments that have raged in Tasmania over forestry issues for decades. Forestry Tasmania is not such a body. Independent expert scrutiny must be applied to all environmental, social and economic claims in Forestry Tasmania's information contained in the papers.

We would like to draw your attention to some of our concerns:

1. There has been little or no attention paid to the broader health implications of current forestry operations upon individuals and communities and what benefits may arise from changing current practices. We note that Paper 4 addresses OH&S issues. Other health issues include:
 - Water quality and the impact of harvesting on water catchments has not been addressed. This is an area of much study, and we draw your attention to work done by Doctors For Native Forests in Victoria, and their study *Logging and Water: Implications for Melbourne*, published in 2002 (paper attached as a pdf file and available at <http://www.doctors.forests.org.au/>). This report commented that:

"Logging has been clearly shown to reduce water yield from forested areas by up to 50%, 30 years after logging and is projected to take 150 years to return to pre-logged levels. This water loss results because mature forests use very little water, allowing large amounts of water to flow into streams and catchments, while a new growing forest after logging uses large amounts of water, leaving little left over to flow into streams and water supplies."

Another paper, *Plantations, Farm Forestry and Water: A Discussion Paper* (O'Loughlin E and Nambiar EKS, 2001) has commented that:

“Plantations will have the maximum effect on surface water flows if they are established in high rainfall areas, especially if these areas are sources of water for downstream water users. ...Plantings in higher-rainfall zones (e.g. 850 - 1500 mm) will result in greater reductions in streamflow. If extensive afforestation occurs in these zones, it will reduce water yield from these catchments, which currently have high water productivity. The water allocated for downstream users will therefore be less secure.”

It is our understanding that little or no work has been done in this important area in Tasmania, and that the discussion papers do not take water issues into account. It is interesting to note in “Australia’s State of the Forests Report 2003” (available online at www.affa.gov.au/brs) the recurrent theme in Chapter 4 “Conservation and Maintenance of Soil and Water Resources” is the lack of data available for water and soil quality: “However, inadequate or non-existent baseline data are a serious impediment to the development of a national data set” (p173).

- Use of chemicals in forestry operations and their impact upon individuals and communities has not been covered. The most contentious chemical in use in forestry operations is sodium monofluoroacetate (1080). Doctors For Forests has grave concerns about the use of this chemical, and its use has not been covered by the discussion papers. Our concerns include:
 - Use of 1080 close to residential areas
 - Use of 1080 around water catchments
 - The “collateral damage” of 1080 use: poisoned pets in surrounding areas
 - The use of the poison without a diagnostic test or antidote.
 - The use of 1080 on native animals
 - We refer you to our issues paper on the use of 1080 poison in Tasmania in Appendix 1

We are aware that the Australian pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (the APVMA) is currently conducting a review into the use of 1080 and that its findings are expected soon.

- Safety issues must be paramount and we are concerned that workers could be exposed to higher risk with varying silvicultural methods. In this instance we would urge a high level of caution prior to the commencement of harvesting operations and if, after a thorough risk assessment is carried out and an unacceptable danger exists (eg, as identified on steep slopes, etc), then harvesting should not proceed. Such areas should not be considered for harvesting in the first place.
- The papers have not addressed the impact of current forestry practices in Tasmania upon global issues such as global warming. This will have an impact upon all aspects of the health of individuals and communities in the

coming years and must not be ignored. Issues to consider include carbon release from regeneration burns, altered rainfall and climate patterns resulting from climate change, and air quality. The health impacts of climate change have been identified and have been reported in mainstream medical journals, such as the British Medical Journal, which wrote in its November 9, 2002 edition:

“Arguably, climate change is one of the largest environmental and health equity challenges of our times; wealthy energy consuming nations are most responsible for the emissions that cause global warming, yet poor countries are most at risk.”

Forestry Tasmania does not appear to have considered the impact of its practices on greenhouse gas emissions. It is likely that moving away from Clearfell, Burn & Sow Silviculture could have a positive effect on greenhouse emissions – a point obviously not considered when this method was introduced around 50 years ago. Doctors For Forests believe this to be of paramount importance when considering harvesting practices, yet it has not been mentioned in these papers, except in the context of referring to burning forests for energy in Paper 5 (interestingly, a practice ruled out by most other state governments in Australia).

On the other hand, it is possible that income could be created by the carbon-trading scheme as proposed by the Kyoto Protocol – this could offset some or all of the costs associated with changing forestry practices in Tasmania. FT has failed to investigate this important possibility in these papers. Whilst there are exciting possibilities for forestry to be part of the solution of climate change and acting as greenhouse sinks, these positive effects are significantly offset by the massive release of carbon into the atmosphere when regeneration burns after clearfelling takes place.

2. Social issues associated with current forestry operations need further assessment and consideration. Issues here include:
 - Impact upon other industries in Tasmania such as:
 - Beekeeping
 - Tourism
 - Organic farming
 - Noise pollution from harvesting and transport operations.
 - Low wages associated with contractors and transport workers.
3. Paper 3, “*FINANCIAL, ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS*”, has a number of flaws and has failed to consider the wide range of opinions and practices occurring in other jurisdictions. These include:
 - The situation in Western Australia has not been fully independently reviewed. The authors considered a single opinion (from the forestry industry) and have

not taken into account a number of other benefits that have arisen from the implementation of the “Saving Old-Growth Forests” policy. Doctors For Forests believe that the situation is quite different from that portrayed in these discussion papers (which concurs with the Tasmanian State Government’s opinion). Our response is detailed in Appendix 2, “*Doctors For Forests Analysis of the Impact of Western Australia’s Protecting Old-Growth Forests Policy*”.

- The papers fail to take into account what has happened in other jurisdictions where harvesting has moved away from logging in old-growth forests. QLD, NSW, Victoria and WA (as mentioned above) have all undertaken similar transitions, yet little mention is made of these jurisdictions. Many of the practices used in Tasmania are no longer employed by other states, and Forestry Tasmania fails to acknowledge this in the discussion papers. Doctors For Forests have reviewed a number of these changes around the country in Appendix 3, “*Tasmania: Isolated from the rest of Australia by more than Bass Strait: A review of forestry practices around the country by Doctors For Forests*”
- Doctors For Forests do not believe that Paper 3 has been adequately independently peer - reviewed: one of the reviewers, Dr Bruce Felmingham, has often commented publicly in favour of Forestry Tasmania’s current practices and has been employed as a consultant to Forestry Tasmania. It is common practice in scientific journals for authors and reviewers to declare any potential conflicts of interest, and this has not been done in this instance.

We reiterate that any analysis of the future direction of public forests should have been prepared by a fully independent expert body, at arms length from the longstanding political arguments that have raged in Tasmania over forestry issues for decades. We do not believe Forestry Tasmania is such a body. Independent expert scrutiny must be applied to all environmental, social and economic claims in Forestry Tasmania’s information contained in the papers for the sake of credibility.

4. Other issues of concern to Tasmanians have not been addressed. These include:

- The continuing conversion of native forests to plantations. We believe this to be unsustainable and unacceptable. The 2002-2003 Annual Report by the Forest Practices Board indicates that this is still occurring at a significant rate, as displayed by the following table:

Native forests - area (hectares) of operations covered by Forest Practices Plans certified in 2002/2003 by harvesting method, future land use and tenure (Forest Practices Board Annual Report 2002-2003, p14)

	Partial logging ¹	Clearfelling followed by:			Non-forest land use ²	Total
		Regeneration By seeding	Plantation			
			Eucalypt	Pine		
State forest	10,120	4,820	2,930	300	100	18,270
Private Land	10,600	1,360	2,430	60	2,600	17,050
Total	20,720	6,180	5,360	360	2,700	35,320

¹ thinning, retention of advanced growth, seedtrees, or shelterwood; or group or single tree selection

² clearing, primarily for agriculture and infrastructure, including roads

- Biodiversity issues need much closer attention. It is disturbing that whilst Clearfell, Burn and Sow (CBS) harvesting is the preferred option for harvesting, it is acknowledged as having the worst ranking in terms of biodiversity (Paper 1, page 3). This is particularly concerning in terms of climate change, where the linkages with biodiversity are especially important. The developing National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan (a Federal Government project, www.ea.gov.au) notes the following:
 - Changes to Australia’s climate are already occurring (e.g. spatial and temporal changes in rainfall and temperature patterns) and these changes are having a measurable impact on Australia’s biological diversity
 - Climate change will add to existing pressures on Australia’s biodiversity, potentially magnifying the negative influence of a range of existing pressures such as invasion by weeds, pests and diseases, degradation and fragmentation of ecosystems and, pollution
 - Reducing the impacts of existing pressures on biodiversity will decrease the vulnerability of species and ecosystems to climate change impacts

Forestry Tasmania would do well to address this last point when assessing the appropriateness in continuing CBS harvesting and other practices currently in use.

It is important to note that biodiversity is closely linked to human health – as recognized by the project ‘BIODIVERSITY: ITS IMPORTANCE TO HUMAN HEALTH’, a Project of the Center for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School (Under the Auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)). More publications and information relating to this important area is becoming available each month – yet Forestry Tasmania does not appear to be aware of the area at all.

- The Tasmanian forestry industry is undoubtedly woodchip-driven. The massive increase in woodchip production in the last five years to the current levels of in excess of five million tonnes per annum has not seen a corresponding increase in sawlog or veneer production. This lack of downstream processing and value-adding in Tasmania is contributing to ongoing poverty and disempowerment in the regional areas which are seeing the loss of resource but no corresponding returns. This is a loss of opportunity which is unsustainable. This is in stark

contrast to “high-value, low-volume” forestry as practised by boat-builders and furniture makers and other industries such as tourism and bee-keeping.

Similarly, there are health impacts of a woodchip driven industry – the people of Burnie regularly complain about the health effects of the huge woodchip mountains in the centre of town. Doctors For Forests believe that authorities have not yet adequately addressed their concerns.

Summary:

Doctors For Forests believe that Forestry Tasmania has failed to consider a number of essential factors associated with forestry practices in Tasmania. These issues include:

- Water issues – quality and catchment
- 1080 use
- Impacts upon other industries
- Climate change impacts
- Biodiversity impacts
- Conversion of native forests to plantations
- Progress and change in other jurisdictions – any views portrayed have been biased and lacking the broader view
- A lack of a truly independent peer-review process, especially in Paper 3

It is imperative that the organisation provides impartial and complete advice to the government so that appropriate decisions can be made. Based on the content of these papers, we are not hopeful that this can occur. We hope that Forestry Tasmania takes our comments into consideration. We would be happy to elaborate further on these points at any time.

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Spokesman, Doctors For Forests
May 13 2004

References

Note: a selection of reference papers and textbooks relating to health and the environment are available from Doctors For Forests. We would be pleased to provide Forestry Tasmania with this information upon request.

O'Loughlin E and Nambiar EKS (2001) *Plantations, Farm Forestry and Water: A Discussion Paper* Water and Salinity Issues in Agroforestry No. 8 RIRDC Publication No. 01/137

Hughes, R (2002) *Logging and Water: Implications for Melbourne* Doctors for Native Forests, Melbourne <http://www.doctors.forests.org.au>

National Forest Inventory (2003) *Australia's State of the Forests Report 2003* Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra

Patz JA & Kovats RS (2002) *Hotspots in climate change and human health* BMJ 325:1094-8 www.bmj.com

Appendix 1

Issues Relating to 1080 Use in Tasmania

1. Native animals

It is disconcerting and bizarre that whilst 1080 is used in other jurisdictions to protect native animals, it is used to poison them here in Tasmania.

In Tasmania, 1080:

- Is used to target browsing animals – which are our native herbivore marsupials – such as the Tasmanian pademelon (*Thylogale billardierii*), Bennett’s wallaby (*Macropus rufogriseus*) and brushtail and ringtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula* & *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*).
- Is used for commercial purposes only – it is not playing a major role in species control or eradication of predators. Doctors for Forests strongly suspects the number of viable alternatives currently being discussed would be readily introduced tomorrow if 1080 was suddenly made unavailable.

It is acknowledged that whilst there is 1080 being employed as part of the fox eradication program, we must stress that this is taking place in isolated, tightly controlled pockets of Tasmania and there is no evidence at this time that a breeding fox colony has been established

- **Has a substantial impact upon non-target native species.** “Collateral damage” has a number of serious consequences in Tasmania, especially in the island’s role as a refuge for mammals such as the Tasmanian Devil (*Sarcophilus harrisi*) (now extinct in mainland Australia), the Spotted Quoll (*Dasyurus maculates*) listed as “vulnerable” under the threatened species list, and the Eastern Quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) now considered extinct on mainland Australia .

These creatures are presumed to feed upon poisoned carcasses. We say “presume” because of the paucity of research in this area – in a recent study, radio-collars have been recovered from animals targeted for poisoning (LeMar and McArthur, 2000) – the carcasses had been eaten by something – very likely to be scavengers such as devils, quolls, or raptors. The poison may affect these creatures in ways unknown. They may be killed by the poison, and it could be argued the animals that are not killed are weakened in such a way that they are more easily predated.

Other native animals are known to be affected, and include wombats and wedge-tailed eagles. We note that Forestry Tasmania and the APVMA calls for sound research, but it is felt that this is unable to occur, because the evidence regarding the effects on non-target species in particular, and 1080 in general is simply unable to be collected (see point number 3). The precautionary principle may well have a role in this respect.

2. Other effects

A highly contentious use of 1080 in Tasmania is related to its use in the clearfelling of native forests and their replacement by monoculture plantations. This sort of forestry is practiced very close to major population centres, and therefore 1080 has a potential impact upon a large number of people.

- 1080 is used in close proximity to residential areas, which raises a number of concerns regarding non-target effects, some of which include:
 - Consumption by domestic animals – numerous examples exist where family pets such as dogs have been poisoned. The use of 1080 where this is a risk is all the more concerning given there is no viable antidote to the poison.
 - Effect on neighbouring organic farms (i.e., organic certification is put at risk)
 - Effect on waterways, many of which provide potable water in Tasmania
 - Possible health issues for humans

A number of these concerns have been dismissed by regulatory authorities in Tasmania citing regulation within the industry as being adequate and the lack of credible research to back up claims of possible harm.

3. Lack of credible research

It can be argued that it is next to impossible to obtain anything better than case reports or case series for any of these issues. Reasons for this include:

- Lack of any diagnostic test for 1080 consumption in current use
- Lack of reliable “numerators” and “denominators” for any such study – namely, the difficulty in finding the true number poisoned and finding the total number of a population at risk.

Perhaps it is worth pointing out that the specific safety of 1080 use in Tasmania’s context is not backed up by credible research, and perhaps the “onus of proof” should be upon users to provide evidence that continued use is safe...rather than evidence to prove that it isn’t safe. **One gets the impression that if 1080 was proposed to be introduced as a new chemical today it would fall well short of any acceptable safety standards that would allow its registration.**

4. Effect on “Brand Tasmania”

Tasmania is quite rightly promoted as a special and unique place with a clean and green image. This image has been identified as being essential for Tasmania to develop a niche in the world...and essential for our island to progress economically and socially. It can be easily argued that the use of a poison such as 1080 seriously adversely impacts upon this image and puts our future at risk. The majority of Australians see Tasmania as a wilderness refuge, and marketing of our products exploits this concept. (see any Cascade beer advertisement or any tourism promotion). 1080 impacts upon our trade and our future – poisoning unique endangered mammals does not sit well with a clean and green image or future.

In conclusion, there are a number of concerning aspects regarding the use of 1080, which appear to be unique to Tasmania. It has been difficult to find any input from the State Department of Health and Human Services regarding its use...it seems to be purely the domain of DPIWE (Department of Primary Industries, Water and the Environment)...see www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au for more information. **We are unaware of any other jurisdiction in Australia which specifically targets native animals the way it is done in Tasmania.**

5. Virally induced Cancer in widespread Tasmanian Devil populations

You will be aware that the Tasmanian Devil population is currently suffering from a form of cancer, which at this stage appears to have a retrovirus as its causative agent. The disease was first described in the mid 1990's and has now been seen in most areas of the State.

Current research by the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (DPIWE), indicates the disease is density-dependent and is killing more than 90% of adults in high-density areas and 40-50% in medium-low density areas. DPIWE have predicted that a majority of devils will be affected across the state. Marked reductions in Devil populations have been noted.

Doctors For Forests believe the following issues must be considered:

- There is a paucity of research into the possible effects of 1080 poisoning of non-target species such as the Tasmanian Devil,
- 1080 is used by the timber industry across the State and in large amounts,
- DPIWE has stated that the majority of Tasmanian Devils across the state will be affected by the retroviral induced cancer,
- Stocks of Tasmanian Devils already weakened by this virus could undergo additive threat by eating carcasses poisoned with 1080,

- We are unaware of any research into the existence or extent of any additive effects of this viral induced cancer and consumption of 1080 poisoned carcasses by Tasmanian Devils.

Whilst it is acknowledged that 1080 is being employed as part of a current fox eradication program, we stress that this is taking place in isolated, tightly controlled pockets of Tasmania. The 1080 bait is buried deeply and DPIWE is making every effort to prevent collateral poisoning of other animals. There is no evidence at this time that a breeding fox colony has been established in Tasmania.

For information on the disease affecting Tasmanian devils see the DPIWE website www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au.

6. Legal implications arising from the use of 1080 Poison in Tasmania

A number of court cases have arisen from the use of 1080 poison in Tasmania, and we believe that users of 1080 should be aware of these landmark cases.

1. A dog owner from the Deloraine area, Ms Sandy Tiffin, was recently successful in the Small Claims Division of the Magistrates Court. She won a claim for \$294.05 in veterinary costs associated with the accidental poisoning of her dog from a carcass from a 1080 poison drop on an adjoining property in 2002. The Magistrate found that, although there was no evidence that the permit holder breached the conditions of his permit, 1080 use for the eradication of marsupial herbivores poses a serious risk to neighbours and that permit holders have a common law duty of care to contain the potential risks to their own property "to the extent of erecting suitable fencing".

This obviously has implications for all users of 1080 poison; especially considering the effect it has on dogs. There are many documented cases of "collateral damage" from the use of 1080 poison in Tasmania. DFF has previously noted the susceptibility of dogs to the poison.

2. A 2003 Supreme Court decision by Justice Peter Evans confirmed that a user of land was obliged to take responsibility for the way 1080 affected people outside the boundary of the land. This has significant implications for users of 1080 poison in this state, and authorities need to consider this when making a decision regarding the use of 1080 in Tasmania. (Gunns Ltd v Kingborough Council and Stuart Young TASSC 44 26 June 2003)

Given the above, we believe that continuing use of 1080 poison in its current context in Tasmania is untenable and must be seriously questioned.

Appendix 2

Analysis of the Impact of Western Australia's Protecting Old-Growth Forests Policy

A review by Doctors For Forests, May 2004

www.doctorsforforests.com

Western Australia has undergone a transformation in its management of old-growth forests which has largely escaped notice in Tasmania. Even though WA's forests are nowhere near as impressive as our own giants, the WA experience has implications for Tasmania. I will examine the WA experience based on publicly available information (with links and references) and personal observation.

Dr Geoff Gallop was elected Premier of Western Australia in early 2001, largely on the back of a 'saving old-growth forests' policy. The summary of the policy is as below and the full policy can be accessed at

<http://www.wa.alp.org.au/download.html?filename=camp2001/forest.pdf>

Labor is committed to the full protection of all our remaining old-growth and high conservation value forests and will take a holistic approach to forest policy: incorporating forest protection and management; new jobs for timber workers; timber industry assistance; the plantation industry; ecotourism; and the restructuring of the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Labor will:

- **immediately end logging in nearly 99 per cent of Western Australia's old-growth forests by placing in reserves approximately 340,500 hectares of the 346,000 hectares of remaining old-growth forests;**
- place an immediate moratorium on the remaining one per cent and review forward logging plans and timber contracts to determine whether the current contracts can be honoured in line with the sustainable yield set by the Regional Forest Agreement without logging this remaining unreserved area of old-growth forests.
- create 30 new national parks, including the 12 new national parks promised under the RFA, and 2 new conservation parks;
- create approximately 200,000 hectares of new reserves, in addition to the 150,000 protected under the RFA;
- reinstate the 17 proposed reserves (54,000 hectares) revoked by the Government during the RFA;
- reserve "icon" old-growth forests including the Walpole Wilderness Area, Greater Kingston, Greater Beedelup, Jane, Easter, Hilliger and Gardner;
- create 130 new, secure jobs in CALM and the Forest Products Commission;
- assist displaced timber workers to make the transition to an estimated 1,080 new, direct jobs that will be created in 2001 in plantation management and the Albany chip mill.

This policy has been met by staunch opposition by the timber industry. The following is an extract from a Timber Communities Australia media release, dated October 3, 2003 (the full release available from www.tca.org.au, accessed 14th December):

TCA Pleads for state and federal government ministers to grow up

...Ms Campbell said the decision to halt old-growth logging in Western Australia had been an absolute disaster from day one. The Manjimup Shire has lost twenty five percent of its full time workforce as a direct outcome of the Protecting Our Old Growth Forest Policy. Most of

Manjimup's skilled workforce had been forced to leave the community, and many CBD businesses had closed, and were still closing.

"We've lost a huge percentage of the backbone of our community – our volunteers, good solid citizens. Put that together with economic and social uncertainty, and you have rural communities on a rapid decline."

It has also been discussed in our own state parliament. Our Deputy premier, Mr Paul Lennon, quoted from Hansard on October 2 2003 (interestingly, *the day immediately before the Timber Communities Australia release*):

FORESTRY - PROTECTION OF OLD-GROWTH FOREST IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

[10.53 a.m. October 2 2003]

(Parts of the transcript have been edited...interjections and other material have been removed – full transcript available from www.parliament.tas.gov.au)

Mr KEN BACON (Question) - Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Economic Development, Resources and Energy. Minister, it has been asserted recently that Western Australia has protected 99 per cent of its old-growth forest in 2001, and it has not been a disaster for that State. Can you inform the House about any impacts this decision has had?

Mr LENNON - I thank the member for his question. Yes, I am aware that these claims have been made. In fact, in the *Mercury* on Thursday 25 September there appeared a letter to the editor by Geoff Couser which claimed in part that Western Australia's Geoff Gallop protected 99 per cent of his State's old-growth forest in 2001 and, quote, 'It has not been a disaster for the State'.

Mr Speaker, let me just advise members what has happened in Western Australia and the impacts of that decision - ... - Mr Speaker, the Manjimup Shire has been greatly affected by the reduction of resource. About 120 000 people live in this community. Within 18 months of that decision, 25 businesses have already been forced to close their doors. I know it is a matter of great mirth and fun to the Greens, who could not care less about the people in this debate, so they mumble away over there joking and laughing and carrying on. These businesses were not sawmills. These businesses existed in the main street of this city, 25 of them, all retail businesses that have had to close their doors. The flow-on effect of this on the community has been absolutely devastating...

...How many jobs have been lost? This decision has cost 2000 jobs in Western Australia and another 1500 to 2000 jobs associated with other industries attached to the timber industry.

Few would argue that the above figures are concerning and that any such effects would be a disaster for the communities involved. The comparisons to the Tasmanian situation are compelling: many communities rely on the timber industry and are concerned that any change to policy could lead to widespread job losses. This claim has been subject to some dispute but has yet to be examined by the Tasmanian government. Mr Lennon, in announcing that Forestry Tasmania would undertake a review of old-growth logging and how to move away from it by 2010 (as per *Tasmania Together* benchmarks) has made it clear that he would not tolerate "one job lost" in implementing such a policy (*even if it would lead to more jobs elsewhere??*). Therefore, it's worth examining the WA experience in closer detail. How correct are the claims made by Mr Lennon? Or is he just accepting the information fed to him by the industry?

Let's have a look at the most recent Labour market figures, taken from the publication "SMALL AREA LABOUR MARKETS AUSTRALIA: SEPTEMBER QUARTER 2003", produced by the Australian Government, Department Of Employment And Workplace Relations - Economic and Labour Market Analysis Branch, Employment Analysis and Evaluation Group ... accessed from www.workplace.gov.au on 14th December 2003. I acknowledge that statistics are sometimes difficult to interpret on the surface, and that factors such as "seasonal adjustment" and the like need to be taken into account; but the following data compares similar data with similar data.

Let's start by looking at the so-called "smoothed series"; ...these are on pages 11, 26, 28 and 29 of the document (transcribed and compiled by me for on-line publication, but you can check the figures yourself at the links above):

NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, STATES/TERRITORIES AND STATISTICAL LOCAL AREAS, SEPTEMBER QUARTER 2002 TO SEPTEMBER QUARTER 2003: SMOOTHED SERIES

Statistical Region:	Unemployment					Unemployment Rate (%)				
	Sep 02	Dec 02	Mar 03	Jun 03	Sep 03	Sep 02	Dec 02	Mar 03	Jun 03	Sep 03
Australia	644,100	629,100	618,600	616,300	611,200	6.5	6.3	6.2	6.1	6.0
WA	64,000	63,300	61,900	61,300	61,100	6.3	6.2	6.0	5.9	5.9
Manjimup	261	279	286	293	275	4.0	4.4	4.7	4.9	4.7
Tasmania	18,700	18,600	19,000	18,900	17,900	8.6	8.6	8.7	8.6	8.1

*The more unwieldy link is <http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0.1251.a3%253D475%2526a0%253D0%2526a1%253D517%2526a2%253D533.00.html>

A number of observations can be made from the above figures:

- Western Australia has an unemployment rate approximately the same as the national average
- Tasmania has an unemployment rate markedly higher than both WA and the national average
- The Manjimup statistical region has an unemployment rate:
 - Lower than the rest of WA
 - Lower than the national average
 - Lower than Tasmania's
- Manjimup recorded a rise in unemployment from 4.0% to 4.7% between Sep 02 and Sep 03: 14 more people out of work over the 12 month period.

(For the record, WA had the same unemployment rate of 5.9% prior to Mr Gallop's election (December 2000 figures) - Tasmania's was 9.0% at the same time and Australia's was 6.2%)

Where are the 3500 - 4000 people unemployed as quoted by Mr Lennon in Hansard on October 2 2003? Do the labour market figures suggest that it has been a disaster for the state of

WA? I don't think so. If anything, it suggests we could learn something from Mr Gallop's government.

However, there are other indicators which assess the social health of a community. I travelled to WA last month, and drove down the main street of Manjimup on a Saturday morning. I counted a maximum of 6 empty shops in the central shopping area. The place seemed quite vibrant, with both the Coles and Woolworths full. There were cafes and car dealerships, and I literally could not get a park. The Elders business was housed in a relatively new building, and the overall impression I received was one of optimism. It was not a dying country town as I was expecting from Mr Lennon's comments. Maybe 25 businesses had closed; but certainly a similar number had taken their place. I don't believe this is a unique phenomenon in rural or urban Australia. Simply saying that 25 businesses have closed their doors is misleading – it does not tell the whole story.

I spoke to one of the local small business owners about the changes in the last two years. The proprietor was upbeat and optimistic about the future. He told me that millions of dollars of investment was flowing into the region for the burgeoning wine industry; some \$80 million of tourist investment had come into the region over the preceding 12 months. The region is responsible for most of WA's avocado and potato production and generally people were excited about the future. Even the timber industry is excited, as evidenced by the following news item taken from the National Association of Forest Industries website (www.nafi.com.au, accessed 14/12/2003):

Timber Policy Adds Value

THE Western Australian timber industry is coming to terms with the State Government's old-growth forest policy and the imminent announcement of the forest management plan. The West Australian (Natasha Granath) (p22, 10 December 2003)

THE Western Australian timber industry is coming to terms with the State Government's old-growth forest policy and the imminent announcement of the forest management plan. Although the move towards a value-adding timber industry has been slow and has required great capital outlay, a number of big timber processors are confident that business will flourish once they secure log allocations.

Environment Minister Judy Edwards said the plan would be unveiled this month, confirming how much timber volumes would be allocated to short-listed companies.

Whittakers Timber Products general manager Trevor Richardson said once they were announced, the company would be able to progress with further value-adding projects. Banks would have greater confidence to invest in future projects. The mill is purportedly the State's second biggest manufacturer and has a Government contract for the supply of 23,000cu m of jarrah sawlogs and 9000cu m of karri, which it processes for outdoor furniture.

"The Government's new philosophy is to do more with less and to encourage value adding, to the point where you won't get one of the new contracts without at least 90 per cent of your resources being value-added," Mr Richardson said. "It has turned our business around dramatically and we are now more heavily involved in value adding, which is much more profitable but requires enormous capital."

Mr Richardson said the company could install a \$6 million mill and move on plans for the future if he secured expected volumes. "We see a brilliant future for the industry, providing we can get the expected contracts that will make our projects commercially viable," he said. **"The debate over old-growth logging is long finished - we accept that and want to look to doing more with what resource is available."**

No-one would deny that change can be difficult, and it can take time. But has the WA policy been a disaster for the state? On the whole, it appears not. The state has an unemployment rate much lower than our own, and the south-west of WA appears to be booming. The timber industry in WA has been forced to be smarter with its resource. Our own state government is willing to assist abattoirs, ship-builders and other industries to change direction, but why is the logging industry off-limits? The WA example suggests that it is worth the investment to facilitate change.

Questions about the policy have been raised in the WA Parliament. The following is taken from the WA Hansard from proceedings on the 11th of June this year (sourced from <http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/home.nsf>):

TIMBER HARVEST AND FURNITURE INDUSTRY IN MANJIMUP

794. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

I refer to Labor's 2001 election policy "protecting our old-growth forests" which promised "a holistic approach to forest policy: incorporating forest protection and management; new jobs for timber workers; timber industry assistance; the plantation industry; ecotourism; and the restructuring of the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM)".

- (1) Given that the Labor Party has been in government for almost two and a half years, when will the Premier be making an announcement on the allowable timber harvest?
- (2) Will he support the establishment of a furniture industry in Manjimup?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

(1)-(2) I am pleased to see that the member for Warren-Blackwood has defined our approach correctly. We have a holistic approach. **We came into government with a policy of stopping the logging of old-growth forests. It was probably the most significant decision ever made for Western Australian forest policy... It takes Labor to do these things because it has the vision for the future of our State. We have stopped the logging of old-growth forests. People in Western Australia stand a little bit taller today because they know that this State's ancient forests are not being cut down, as was the case under the coalition Government.** We accept our responsibility to work with those people affected by the policy. We have developed an excellent relationship with local governments, local businesses, the timber industry and newly developing industries in that area. I congratulate the Ministers for the Environment, the South West, State Development, Forestry and Education and Training, previously the Minister for Training, for the work they are doing to ensure that holistic approach is carried through. A change is occurring in the timber industry in Western Australia. Only a few weeks ago I was at the opening of the new mill in Dardanup, which has up-to-date technology to deal with plantation timber. Plantation timber is now being used in the housing industry in Western Australia. Its use is expanding in leaps and bounds. Our policy has encouraged that industry to develop. We also want to encourage the high value-adding industry, which is the point the member for Warren-Blackwood addressed. We want to see those high value-adding industries operating.

Mr C.J. Barnett: When will you do something about Manjimup?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition has been to Manjimup. I have been there twice in recent days. I have met with the shire council and economic interests there, as has the Minister for the Environment. We are really moving things along in that area. Do members know how we are doing that? We are doing it on the basis of win, win. Opposition members go to a community and ask themselves where they can create division, whether it be between black and white, country and city or employer and employee. They then think they can feed off that division.

The division they have created in that area is between the greenies and the foresters, but it is a false division. We have cut away all those divisions; we are uniting people throughout Western Australia for the future. Included in that future will be the furniture industry of which we are very proud. Its achievements in recent years have been magnificent. I was very proud to go to the United Arab Emirates with a major trade

delegation that included representatives of the State's furniture industry. It is a creative, productive, export-oriented, excellent industry. We would like to see those sorts of things happening in the electorate of the member for Warren-Blackwood.

Summary

The employment statistics, the story about Whittakers Timber, and my own observations support the idea that the South-West of WA is not in decline.

Appendix 3

Tasmania: Isolated from the rest of Australia by more than Bass Strait

A review of forestry practices around the country by Doctors For Forests
www.doctorsforforests.com

Prepared for Forestry Tasmania Submission, May 2004.

The following is a review of logging around the country – it is important to note that all of these changes have occurred under state Labor governments. Whilst the situation around the country is still not perfect, this provides an example of how the Tasmanian government and the forestry industry is becoming increasingly isolated from the rest of Australia.

Queensland – The Sunshine State never even signed an RFA...instead the players came up with their own negotiated settlement which pretty well pleased everyone. The Queensland economy doesn't seem to be suffering too much as a result; in fact, it's booming. The timber town of Ravenshoe, which was the scene of angry confrontations between Senator Graham Richardson and timber workers in the 1980's, is part of the unique far north QLD wet tropics area to which people are flocking (even more than Tasmania).

More information at <http://www.env.qld.gov.au/environment/park/managing/>

Victoria: Premier Steve Bracks recognised in February 2002 that the science behind the RFA's was flawed and that "... we know that the current level of logging in Victorian forests is unsustainable and that we are at risk of losing one of our most valuable resources..." ("Victorian Government Policy Statement on Forests: Our Forests Our Future" Feb 2002).

Late last year Premier Bracks pledged to protect the Otway Ranges in a new 150,000ha National Park by 2008; prohibit the burning of native forest for charcoal and electricity generation; and to negotiate an end to woodchipping the Wombat forests by the end of the year. This was on top of pre-election commitments by Mr Bracks including the protection of 120,000ha Box-ironbark forests in new National Parks; the reduction of sawlog license volumes by over 30%, in particular an end to logging in the Cobbobonee forests in the state's far west; and investigating the protection of old growth forests in Goolengook through the Victorian Environment assessment Council (VEAC). However, there is much ongoing concern about the effect of logging on Melbourne's water catchments.

More information at <http://www.vic.alp.org.au/policy/forests&nationalparks.html>

New South Wales: Premier Bob Carr announced 65 000 hectares of new national parks in 2003. On the 2nd of July 2003 fifteen new conservation areas were formally established as the National Parks Estate (Reservations) Bill 2003 passed unamended in the NSW Upper House. He has also said that he will not burn forests for energy production. Bear in mind he also said in 1995 that there would be no woodchips exported from NSW by the year 2000...

More information at <http://members.nswalp.com/html/policy/Environment.pdf> (section 6)

Western Australia – This state under Premier Geoff Gallop significantly modified its RFA in February 2001...in fact, ending old-growth logging was part of an election policy which swept Mr Gallop's ALP to power. The world has not ended and in fact, the south-west of Western Australia is booming with new investment. Indeed, it's worth reviewing parts of the "Protecting our old-growth forests" Policy ...it's interesting to substitute the words "Western Australia" with "Tasmania" (the full document is available at <http://www.wa.alp.org.au/download.html?filename=camp2001/forest.pdf>) and you can see what's happening in the south-west of WA at <http://www.swdc.wa.gov.au>

Labor is committed to the full protection of all our remaining old-growth and high conservation value forests and will take a holistic approach to forest policy: incorporating forest protection and management; new jobs for timber workers; timber industry assistance; the plantation industry; ecotourism; and the restructuring of the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Labor will:

- immediately end logging in nearly 99 per cent of Western Australia's old-growth forests by placing in reserves approximately 340,500 hectares of the 346,000 hectares of remaining old-growth forests;
- place an immediate moratorium on the remaining one per cent and review forward logging plans and timber contracts to determine whether the current contracts can be honoured in line with the sustainable yield set by the Regional Forest Agreement without logging this remaining unreserved area of old-growth forests.
- create 30 new national parks, including the 12 new national parks promised under the RFA, and 2 new conservation parks;
- create approximately 200,000 hectares of new reserves, in addition to the 150,000 protected under the RFA;
- reinstate the 17 proposed reserves (54,000 hectares) revoked by the Government during the RFA;
- reserve "icon" old-growth forests including the Walpole Wilderness Area, Greater Kingston, Greater Beedelup, Jane, Easter, Hilliger and Gardner;
- create 130 new, secure jobs in CALM and the Forest Products Commission;
- assist displaced timber workers to make the transition to an estimated 1,080 new, direct jobs that will be created in 2001 in plantation management and the Albany chip mill.

Federal: The National Forest Policy in 1992 was the fore-runner of the RFA...and a letter I have from the Prime Minister at that time states that there will be no woodchipping of native forest by the year 2000 due to the increasing reliance on plantations.

How else is Tasmania isolated?

1080 – no other jurisdiction uses poison to target native animals for commercial purposes. Paradoxically in Western Australia 1080 (sodium monofluoroacetate) is used to control foxes so that the native animals (the ones we actively seek to poison) can thrive. Bear in mind that Tasmania, being an island, is a refuge for species which are extinct or endangered elsewhere, such as scavengers like the Tasmanian Devil and some species of Quoll. The Eastern Quoll became extinct on the mainland in the 1960's and Tasmania is its last stronghold. The Spotted-tailed Quoll has dramatically declined on the mainland and Tasmania is its last stronghold. The Eastern Barred Bandicoot is on the brink of extinction on the mainland (if not extinct) and its last stronghold is Tasmania. Is it just me or is there a pattern developing? And why is it OK to use the Precautionary Principle when discussing imported New Zealand apples or Canadian salmon but not protecting our own endangered species?

Rainforest logging – Tasmania has Australia's largest tract of temperate rainforest in the Tarkine region, which is under threat from logging this year. Logging rainforest sounds outrageous, but it's accepted as normal in Tasmania. Rainforest only covers 0.5% of Australia's land mass, and is under threat worldwide. And we log it under the auspices of "world's best practice"...

Corporate governance – Tasmania's self-regulation of the forestry industry has led to claims of conflict of interest and poor regulation. A friend of mine was driving down the southern outlet the other day and was speeding...but he still hasn't turned himself in to the police.

Public opinion – has been loudly calling to the government to alter its current policies on old-growth logging. This has been articulated in repeated opinion polls and the Tasmania Together process. Any government would be wise to listen to the people when over 4000 ordinary Tasmanians participate in a march in a forest one-and-a-half hours from Hobart on a wet and miserable day (March for the Styx, July 2003). Broadly speaking, the current state of industrial forestry is incongruous with the current direction and image Tasmania is taking.

Value-adding – Tasmania has an opportunity to create a unique niche in wood products: one based on intelligence and talent. Our boat builders, furniture makers and crafters are world class, and their activities return value to local communities; contrast this with the bulk export of raw materials (ie, woodchips) that return a pittance to the people of Tasmania whilst everyone else in the process makes record profits. This is unsustainable and will leave us with a redundant industry in years to come with nothing special to differentiate us from the rest of the world. At present, Tasmania exports more woodchips than the rest of Australia combined.

Burning native forests for energy – This practice is still on the agenda as far as the Southwood project is concerned, but the concept of burning native forests for energy has been abandoned in other states such as Victoria and NSW. Tasmania, the alleged leader of renewable clean and green energy in Australia, again stands alone. And please don't

insult our intelligence by suggesting that it's only the waste that gets burned...the figures clearly show otherwise.

Log trucks down Hobart's main street and Burnie's woodchip mountains – No other state capital has the spectre of its native forests being paraded down the main street in a bizarre death-row type march...and the citizens of Burnie are often covered in woodchip dust from the woodchip mountains in the centre of town.

Nature-based tourism– Consider the following patterns: Queensland & The Great Barrier Reef, Northern Territory & Kakadu, South Australia and the “Outback”...Tasmania is the only state which makes a big deal about its natural attractions but has failed to adequately protect the resource...I'm sorry Mr Bacon, but the tallest trees in Australia (The Styx) and the largest tract of temperate rainforest in Australia (The Tarkine) seem pretty special. It wasn't that long ago that Californians were cutting down giant Redwoods...they stopped doing it and they certainly haven't suffered as a result...and people go to the Tahune Airwalk to see trees still standing. In fact, according to Tourism Tasmania, the majority of people who visit Tasmania come because of the natural environment.