

Please attach the following **one-page summary** to your submission.

Comments on the Interim Report for the Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*

Summary

Name of author/organisation:

**Hellyer Branch Timber Communities Australia
Christine O'Connor
President**

Burnie

Date:

31 July 09

Which chapter(s) of the interim report are you commenting on?

Chapter 6 Forestry

Key points of submission

Disappointed Independent reviewer did not visit the North West and meet communities that depend on our forests.

Warns of the political cost of adopting the green agenda, including the fact that Mark Latham's adoption of green lobbyist criticism of the RFA cost the ALP government in 2004

Invite the Minister to tour the North West and meet face to face with the community prior to accepting the reviews recommendations.

References

Confidentiality statement:

Note that all submissions unless otherwise indicated will be published on this website. You MUST indicate on your submission if you wish for your submission not to be published. If you wish for your submission to not be published please mark your submission as 'Confidential'. You should note that even if your submission is not published, the title of your submission and the name of the submitting organisation or individual will be published on the web site. If you wish to not have your details published please contact the Secretariat before making a submission. Contact details from individuals making submissions will be limited to name, suburb and State/Territory.

Do you want this submission to be treated as confidential?

(please state 'yes' or 'no') no

These comments contain personal information of a third party individuals. The third party individual **consents/does not consent** (*delete or strike out that which is not applicable*) to the publication of their information.

Hellyer Branch Timber Communities Australia

Burnie 7320

President
Secretary



Comments on the Interim Report for the Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*

I seek to provide the following comments on behalf of members of the Hellyer Branch of Timber Communities Australia. We are absolutely amazed to find the recommendations listed in Chapter 6 *Forestry* of this review. They are a return to the dark days prior to the log truck blockade of Parliament House Canberra in 1995, when individual forest operations were assessed on a case by case basis, after the then Labor Environment Minister excluded logging from significant areas of native forests and we had the farce of annual export approvals by the Commonwealth in order to over ride States' rights.

It is a return to the 2004 Election where our local federal member, the ALP's Sid Sidebottom, lost his seat, when his then national leader adopted the forest policy of the ACF and Wilderness Society to ban all timber harvesting in 'high conservation value' forests. The reviewer fails to warn the Minister that such a policy cost the ALP government.

The recommendations are to re-introduce Latham's folly by stealth!

Our Hellyer branch of TCA is located here in North West Tasmania centred on the City of Burnie. Burnie is the home to a paper mill and when the RFA was signed also a pulp mill. However the certainty created by the RFA and the EPBC as amended came too late to secure investment to upgrade the pulp mill and it is now closed. The paper mill faces an uncertain future despite producing a renewable and carbon neutral product and providing long term and worthwhile jobs at the mill and in feeder industries.

If the recommendations of the interim review are adopted, members of our Branch fear that the pulp and paper manufacture in the North West will have no immediate future. This is ironic as due to the global financial crisis our region desperately needs jobs and investment, and we welcomed the Government's initiatives to ensure jobs are maintained. Yet this billion dollar investment in our nation is at risk if these suggested changes to the RFA and EPBC act become law. Who would invest if they are to be subject to a vilification campaign similar to that directed at Tasmanian integrated timber business Gunns Limited for wanting to value add wood chips already planned for harvest and export.

The Burnie pulp and paper industry was created after the last great depression to future proof our region; it is ironic that this new depression could see its end. Hellyer branch members also work in our North West forests and travel around the area, we know at first hand the extensive reserves and positive environmental benefits the Regional Forest Agreement has created, we are at a loss that the review expresses

'real doubt' on these benefits. Why didn't he come to the North West, meet the community and inspect our forests.

The reviewer could have enjoyed our forest based tourism, visited the Savage River National Park and regional reserves created by the RFA. This conservation area contains the largest contiguous temperate rainforest in Australia "The Tarkine" securely reserved for conservation by the RFA. If he had visited he would have found that the "Tarkine" now applies to an area of half a million hectares including Tasmania's largest open cut mine and thousands of kilometres of road as well as infrastructure such as an iron slurry pipeline. Yet much of this expanded area has already been 'saved' by the RFA reserves and those created as a result of the 2004 Election debacle.

It is also amazing to members that the independent reviewer gives authority to a protest group Still Wild Still Threatened and its claim that the science of the agreements was 'overwhelmed by political interference'. A look at the reference for such a claim is a "Statement of Concerned Scientists" issued by the Wilderness Society as part of its 2004 Election campaign to convince the ALP to abandon the RFA.

If the reviewer had visited Tasmania forests he might have met this protest group, camped in squalor in the Florentine Valley near the Gordon River Road, a road constructed to service the Gordon Dam in the 1960s, and now to transport journalist to film the publicity stunts and illegal actions. Again it is ironic that they want to use this law to destroy the timber industry but claim to be above the law when undertaking their political agenda.

My branch members are extremely disappointed that the independent reviewer failed to host community briefing sessions on his review and to allow face to face consultation, that he failed to meet our members and to see for himself the benefits of the RFA and the EPBC act as amended is doing on the ground. His recommendations demand more openness and transparency but how can he expect comment from volunteer community groups and individual members of the general community when he issues a 391 page report.

Hopefully the Minister will visit the North West and meet Sid Sidebottom's electorate before accepting 'the poison chalice of yet another green attempt to undermine the balance achieved by the RFA.

Christine O'Connor
President
Hellyer Branch
Timber Communities Australia

Friday, 31 July 2009