

To whom it may concern,

For the past 10 years my husband and I have lived in the Gippsland region in close proximity to the 'bush'. In that time we have observed the realities of plantations and logging without being able to applaud them. I have sympathy for those who work in the timber industries but have often been saddened by the results of their activities.

Plantations:

For 7 years we lived in the Strezlecki Ranges near Won Wron near operations of Grand Ridge Plantations. In that time we observed that these plantations were covered in pest plants such as ragwort, thistle and blackberries and that were rarely if ever there were measures taken to control these infestations. Private property owners were left to battle the spread of these plants as their seeds were spread from plantation to farmland and private bushland, while land owners would often be asked to control pest plant infestations by the DSE it seemed that large plantations in State Forest were allowed to ignore such problems.

Water quality and quantity was also affected by these plantations. The steep slopes and rainforest gullies were often logged, planted and logged again. This cycle in this location affected creek flow and levels of silt quite dramatically. The great old trees and the gullies of sweet pistoram and treefern and all the smaller understory kept the hills in wonderful condition allowing clean runoff in abundance, filtering the water, deep root systems did not draw on runoff but tended to draw on subterranean water sources. In contrast plantations soil disturbance create a murky runoff and the young trees fast growth utilizes surface water allowing less to flow into waterways.

Both native animals and agriculture are affected negatively by this, native fish and water creatures as well as larger mammals habitat can easily be destroyed in a matter of hours and never be recoverable. Humans downstream relying on water sources that have traditionally run clear and beautiful find their waterways plugged with silt or cut off.

I have seen logging activity in the Strezlecki Ranges on slopes so steep that chain logging is the only way to harvest, you couldn't walk down some of those slopes they are so steep. I have seen rainforest gullies cleaned out except for a small ribbon of treeferns that quickly die in the heat. It is sad and such a waste, I don't believe that these are acceptable practices.

Plantation logging should not be allowed to adversely affect so many other landusers be it native wildlife or agriculture or tourist operators. There are many endangered plants and animals living in the area and it is a region that is an important resource in itself.

I feel sympathy for people who work for plantations and can understand them wanting to keep their jobs, the irony is that their jobs are bought at the cost of other jobs, jobs in agriculture, tourism and environment (such as beekeeping), not to mention the plant and animal resources we are losing before they are even discovered. The Strezlecki Ranges are not extensive and contain no great rivers of the size of the Mitchell or Nicholson Rivers, there are no great mountains the size of Mt Hotham, they are

consistently populated and while they have large areas of bush there are not the extensive wilderness of the Great Dividing Range.

Plantations are not well maintained and detract from the amenity and safety of the area for other residents and forest users.

Now I have been talking about a specific area that I am familiar with and issues that I have seen and experienced in person. This is my example to outline certain points that underline the issues that I am concerned about.

- 1) Plantations should be held accountable for their land use in the same way that a tenant is held accountable for their use of a rental property when on leased land and should be responsible for pest plant and animal infestations.
- 2) Plantation and harvesting operations should not impact on water quality or quantity – the size of a creek is not important as it's outcome.
- 3) Plantations should be low impact in terms of their effect on amenity or other natural resources.
- 4) Plantations should not be allowed to replace native bushland.

While Plantations are one aspect of Timber Supply, old growth and Natural Bushland Harvesting are quite another. Our forests are shrinking at an alarming rate and it seems that there is little care in selecting logging coups, to make matters worse there is a tendency for logging operations to harvest before evaluating the suitability of trees before harvest. While massive old trees may look good on the outside after they are felled they can be found to be hollowed out by rot or termites which make them unsuitable for lumber - I know for a fact that these problems could be identified before they are wasted.

It is a waste to cut down any forest tree that is not to be used for saw milling and these ancient trees are invaluable resources for wildlife.

Below are a number of points that I believe to be important considerations when allowing the harvest of natural bushland:

- 1) Remote locations should be monitored more heavily before and after harvesting to ensure best practice by logging companies who should understand that being allowed to log natural bushland is a privilege and not a right and that this privilege will be removed if they do not comply with best practice.
- 2) No natural bushland should be accessed by wood chipping or pulping concerns.
- 3) All trees in a prospective coup should undergo ultrasound testing before harvesting to ensure that all felled timber is usable.
- 4) Logging of natural bushland on mountain tops and steep slopes should not be allowed as such exposed areas are particularly vulnerable to erosion, add to silt loads in waterways, blocking natural flows and affect freshwater aquatic habitats.

5) Timber Harvesting Companies operating with best practice and a care for habitat and environment should be rewarded with acknowledgement of their achievements, public and fiscal.

6) Timber Harvesting Companies undertaking environmental protection measures should be rewarded. This could be done by logging outfits being given a rating with responsible loggers being given preference over the irresponsible. Ratings should be nominated by independent environmental auditors.

7) Timber Harvesting Companies working in natural bushland should not be allowed to do so if they have not reinstated bushland to it's former conformation and replanted with local seed including understory and grasses.

While I understand that many people rely on the timber industry for their livelihood, I feel that their responsibility and duty of care towards the environment which they make their living off should be increased. In the mountains of Gippsland I have not observed much care towards the environment and view the work of loggers as vandalism.

It is said by Timber Millers that wood from natural bushland is better than plantation timber, that it is stronger, finer, and of higher quality. As a premium resource it should be treated as such.

It should also be recognised that there is a value in natural bushland as trees become important in carbon trading - the Government should not enter into the hypocrisy of forbidding farmers to clear their land while allowing public lands to be stripped of trees that take longer to replace than destroy.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Parker