

A CLASH OF CULTURES: The Fate of Myrtle Creek Catchment Area

Residents of Wyndham and the Myrtle Creek catchment area had campaigned vigorously against proposed timber harvesting in Yurammie State Forest, so Forests NSW (FNSW) agreed to a public consultation session on 11th May.

Wyndham Hall overflowed with locals, blow-ins, loggers and truckies. Shire Councillors and FNSW's CEO, their regional planning manager, a hydrologist, a soil specialist and an ecologist also attended. An hour and a half presentation of scientific data may have been intended to bamboozle with acronyms, figures and graphs. Why was I thinking 'smoke and mirrors'? Predictions were made regarding future conditions yet disregarded reference to climate change. Black figures on digital screens attempting to justify the destruction of a living breathing forest were ironically incongruous.

Each topic was disconnected from the next. It was as if studies of the 'bones, flesh and blood' of the forest were undertaken independently and not on how they interacted. It reminded me of Suzuki's 'sacred balance'. It seemed to be thought that the integrity of the forests would be retained despite removing part of its flesh and exposing its bare bones, disconnecting the blood and nerve flow and expecting that the body of the forest would not alter or suffer.

FNSW's map showing areas of incidence of native species overlaps the map of the proposed logging area. Some areas are designated as being less valuable because **only** swamp wallabies, lyrebirds and wombats were observed there. During logging this wildlife will lose habitat or could be killed. If forest logging continues their existence will be threatened.

As local knowledge and passion were pitched against data, heated debate ensued. Questions flowed from people who were well aware of the potential impact of logging on the catchment area. They pointed out that the February 2010 rains were not indicative of typical seasons yet were included in FNSW's hydrology figures and predictions. FNSW commented that if the water flow was affected post logging, they would consider rebuilding a new water supply. It did not appear rational to them that the existing naturally occurring water supply should not be threatened.

Had there been an adjudicator, the opposition would have won the debate by not only having a comprehensive and clear understanding of the issues, and in some cases a lifetime of knowledge of the area, but by their expressions of love and passion for the beauty of their home land.

On 5th May 2010 Ben Cubby, Sydney Morning Herald, reported that Australia is ranked 9th worst for its absolute impact on the natural environment according to a study of over 200 countries¹. The top reasons for this result were: destruction of forest, loss of habitat and species extinction. The NSW Government should hang its head in shame for condoning the escalation of Australia's ranking by permitting ecocide such as is proposed in the Myrtle Creek catchment area.

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¹ Research by Adelaide University, Princeton University US, National University of Singapore University. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/05/100505092006.htm>
Corey J. A. Bradshaw, Xingli Giam, Navjot S. Sodhi, Stephen Willis. Evaluating the Relative Environmental Impact of Countries. PLoS ONE, 2010; 5 (5): e10440 DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0010440