

Subject: Email to the Prime Minister

Subject: ELECTION STRATEGY:
State Forests, Environment and Climate Action (2010-2020)
'Our Forests-Our Future' 11-SEP@Batemans Bay.

Dear Prime Minister

Events this week highlight the Rudd Government's historic opportunity to lead Australia's Environment and Climate Action (2010-2020).

Feedback on the three inter-related campaign issues of State Forests, Environment and Climate Action (2010-2020) is expanded below, and in the 2-pages attached:

1. STATE FORESTS

Tasmania's Premier Bartlett yesterday promised to continue logging old-growth forests until 2037 (Mercury 2-March).

We are not talking about plantations, which already provide 80% of the jobs and can supply all of Australia's industry needs.

Premier Peter Beattie's leadership ended the 'forest wars' in Queensland. What year was that?
(You will recall his historic controversial decision to reject the RFA and wood-chipping was taken against fierce public opposition from NAFI and their strong supporter, Howard Minister Wilson Tuckey.)

Penny Wong's leadership locally and on REDD projects in Indonesian Forests (Media 1-March) must be matched by similar carbon-evidence-based action in Australia's State Forests. Australia's perceived hypocrisy was demonstrated globally in that ABC TV 7.30 Report on Tasmania in December. Images will be re-played and amplified on TV screens throughout 2010 as similar and different evidence emerges from native forests in Gippsland and Eden-Monaro.

Logging Australia's loss-making State Forests generate massive carbon pollution FAST. Growing trees is SLOW. Graphing Carbon on State Forests 2010-2020 could starkly highlight the difference between 'Climate Action' Plans from our two major parties. I will continue to lobby Greg Hunt in this direction too, but like his previous leader, he may become both inspired and frustrated watching the Conservatives in the UK.

Adjunct Professor Robert Hill told a REDD Seminar I attended at Sydney University last week, "Europeans cleared their native forests centuries ago. Australia has attributes of both undeveloped and developed countries".

Fire risk is a tragic hot topic in Australia.
ANU's scientific advice (released 1-March, refer copy below) confirms that logging tree canopies and uniform re-growth is drying-out Australia's natural native forests and making them dangerously more fire prone. Bushfire Reports and anecdotal evidence suggests (just like ANU's Forest Carbon & Fire Science) that we are simply confirming "the bleeding obvious" and continually stick our heads in the sand. ANU is one of the world's leading Universities. Attacks on ANU experts is an eerie reminder of denial in the Tobacco Industry and other lethal dinosaurs.

NSW Premier Kristina Keneally yesterday announced an end to logging River Red Gums in State Forest areas on the Murray.
The NSW Election Campaign will now feature 'Environment' as their fourth pillar.

2. ENVIRONMENT

The world can see that Australia's EPBC Exemptions under RFAs will increasingly, unnecessarily, embarrassingly, immorally and inevitably generate significant perverse outcomes - in State Forests (2010-2020).

Peter Garrett also has a great opportunity this month (and in the May Budget) to start launching a really effective Biodiversity Strategy.

19-March will only provide the basic platform. As in Cabinet, we will see that our Environment Minister continues to make hard-yards through the worthwhile but glacially slow lowest-common-denominator COAG process. Hopefully we have learnt something from the Murray-Darling process.

Parochial States have always needed an overlay of national leadership. 2010 provides the Rudd Government with an historic opportunity and responsibility on Climate Change and Australia's Environment.

3. CLIMATE ACTION (2010-2020)

As an ex-IBM Manager I am inspired by senior business people I meet who are even more positive about the need for change, than the NGOs I encountered last week at CANA (Climate Action Network Australia). Next week's 3-day Climate Summit in Canberra will provide broader community engagement – including sessions entitled 'Green jobs and trade unions' and 'Protecting forests for the climate'.

We noticed recently your promise to act decisively on Climate Change - on ABC TV's QandA from Old Parliament House - drew rapturous applause from that otherwise apparently neutral young audience. Conversely it worries Australians that Tony Abbott does not seem to care; and does not think a Minister responsible for Australia's Environmental Protection, Heritage and the Arts really needs that role to be a full time job!

This is Australia's 'Transition Decade'.

Mr. Rudd you have the team to sell and deliver this vision for protecting our unique natural heritage as one pillar supporting Australia's transition to a low-carbon economy (attached and below are relevant background details).

My local Member Mike Kelly appears more motivated than ever since Abbott ascended to his Opposition Throne, so I will certainly be following up with Mike, as well as with Ministers Wong and Garrett (I met each in previous roles).

For Australia's sake I wish you well in 2010.
Yours Sincerely

Mike Thompson
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Footnote on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC):

- living in Eden-Monaro, knowing Gippsland, and having just spent 2 months in Tasmania, - I do understand how pivotal FSC is.

* TRADITIONAL OWNER references are strongly supported:

I am one of 3 Minister-appointed Conservation Representatives on the two heavily-forested Biamanga and Gulaga Aboriginal-owned NP Boards:

- outrage of destroying Koala habitat in adjoining RFA-managed NSW Forests currently hitting News.
- Our two Traditional-Owner-majority NP boards have documented letters to the NSW Government dated 2008 and first-Draft PoM to "bring their two sacred mountains together" by taking over NSW Forests dividing their two owned-NPs (their Lease - negotiated by NSW Minister Bob Debus - gave them right to expand).

- Birds Australia tell me these same NSW South Coast Forests are the third habitat area linking our threatened Swift-Parrot across 3 States.
- Future Indigenous Eco-Tourism Jobs depend on these same areas
- Most areas also covered by the AG's 'Wilderness Coast' Regional Tourism Program
- Boards have formally requested education on REDD and want to know how it relates to their Traditional Lands.
- Logging is imminent. Over 80% of logs are wood-chipped in Eden.

CARBON Action Plan (2010-2020).

Our AG is telling Australians to Accept CHANGE in our Homes, CHANGE in our Schools, CHANGE in our Businesses, CHANGE on our Farms,

- But saying (Globally too?) that a trivial and discredited document like an RFA really does PREVENT CHANGE in OUR STATE-OWNED FORESTS ???

REFERENCE Below:

Australian National University News Article - Forest logging creates fire traps: academic - <http://news.anu.edu.au/?p=1990>

Forest logging creates fire traps: Academic MR from ANU 1 March 2010

Decades of industrial logging in Australia's wet forests have made them more fire prone, raising urgent fire management issues, according to an ANU academic.

Professor David Lindenmayer of the Fenner School of Environment and Society challenges current fire protection practices in the March issue of Australasian Science magazine, published today.

"Much discussion focuses on how to best protect human lives and built assets," Professor Lindenmayer writes. "But management also needs to counter the effects of past forestry activities on fire regimes.

"A prominent question is how much fuel or hazard reduction burning is needed to reduce risk. However, widespread fuel reduction burning is not an option in Australia's moist forests and rainforests as they are generally too wet to burn in a controlled manner. Conversely, past forest management, particularly logging operations, may have significantly increased the fire risk.

"Research in tropical rainforests suggests that logging reduces the number of dry days needed to make a forest combustible from 30 to less than eight days. Logging also alters the density and spatial pattern of trees, the spacing between crowns, and other forest attributes in ways that increase their susceptibility to fire. In moist forests in south-eastern Australia, logging has shifted the vegetation toward a composition that is more characteristic of drier forests that tend to be more fire-prone.

"Clear felling of moist forests in southern Australia has produced dense stands of regrowth saplings, thereby creating more available fuel than if the forest was not clearfelled. Furthermore, debris from logging can also sustain fires longer than fuels in uncut forest, while roads required for logging increase the number of ignition points for wildfires and lightning strikes are more likely in logged areas due to logging slash."

Prof Lindenmayer concludes that fire management "will become increasingly important with rapid climate change," and advocates "creating extensive buffer areas that exclude logging near human settlements within landscapes dominated by moist forest... [and] from areas where human disturbances (like timber harvesting) have been limited, such as the old growth wet forests in Tasmania and eastern Victoria."

Mike Thompson

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www.Nature.Net.au (under reconstruction) next www.ForestFestival.net

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