

Subject: Native Forest Logging and RFA's

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Dear Politicians and Editors,

I have been part of an effort by almost an entire community to halt native forest woodchipping on the far south coast of NSW. When I say 'entire community,' I mean Aboriginal elders and young people, who are the traditional and spiritual owners of the forests; long-time greenies; oyster farmers defending their livelihood; an entire locality concerned about the quality of their water supply; and many, many people of all ages, occupations, and backgrounds, who are concerned about the wanton destruction of the habitat of koalas and other native wildlife.

We have just had a victory in a battle, but the war goes on. Forestry NSW (a euphemistic name -- they are really Woodchipping NSW) has been caught out destroying a part of the forest that had been gazetted as Aboriginal land. This followed on to being caught out for many previous breaches, as well as ignoring the evidence of koalas in the area.

This latest transgression has at least halted the destruction of a very beautiful area of forest. However, it also proves what is obvious to all of us fighting to save what is left of our native forests: You can't set the fox to watch over the chicken coop! Forests NSW gets to decide what is appropriate to log. Their reason for being is logging.

The time for native forest logging is over. The Regional Forest Agreements (RFA's) should be called Ridiculously Flawed Arguments. On Landline the other week, an Australian man demonstrated the use of banana waste (stalks, leaves, etc) in making both paper and wood. There are also tree plantations. There is also a move away from overuse of paper, as in electronic books. People will live to what is available. If there is less paper available -- which there may not need to be even without the destruction of native forests -- people will use less paper.

The few jobs remaining in the native forest woodchipping industry carry skills that are easily transferrable -- driving trucks, operating heavy machinery, doing soil surveys, and so on. The many, many, many jobs in the tourism industry that will be lost when we have lost our last koalas in the wild and lost the beauty of our bushland may not be so easily blended back into the workforce. If you're thinking it's easy to say 'Transfer your skills,' when I was in my early 30's (many years ago), and our first child was an infant, I was teaching basic life skills at a program for hardcore unemployed young adults. The funding was discontinued, and I was left without a job, and without the proper qualifications to teach in a school. I got a job teaching computer hardware to adults, and worked the rest of my career with computers. So I'm not talking off the top of my head.

Now is the time for our politicians to follow the lead of the clever people leading the way into new, environmentally friendly methods of doing things, and leave the old destructive ways behind. What better way to begin to combat climate change and drought than by saving our native forests?

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