

## Summary of issues re pulp mill, governance and planning in Tasmania

### In whose interest was the RPDC process scuttled?

Prior to the 2006 Tasmanian State election, Liberal and Labour candidates signed a pulp mill pledge. The media release stated: 'ALL MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATES PLEDGE SUPPORT FOR THE PULP MILL All candidates standing for the major parties at the state election have signed a statement supporting the construction of a pulp mill at Bell Bay, provided it meets the toughest environmental rules in the world. In a joint initiative to protect the proposal from political manoeuvring, Timber Communities Australia and the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union challenged the candidates to sign the pledge.' Mr McLean (CFMEU) said the future of the mill should be decided by the independent RPDC. "Through this communiqué, the major parties have expressed confidence in our planning processes and will therefore accept the umpire's decision." Why is Labour unanimous in dumping the RPDC process now?

Key points in the pledge by liberal and Labour political candidates. 'We advocate the following principles:

1. Support the construction of a pulp mill at Bell Bay provided it meets the environmental standards set by the Tasmanian Government's Environmental Emission Limit Guidelines for any new bleached eucalypt Kraft pulp mill in Tasmania.
2. Have full confidence that a mill complying with the emission guidelines will be safe for the environment and for people.
3. Have confidence in the Resource Planning and Development Commission, to fully assess and satisfy itself that the Integrated Impact Assessment will ensure that the Mill will meet the guidelines it has set to examine social economic and environmental impacts.
4. Oppose the dissemination of deceptive, dishonest or misleading material and will ensure that their public comment will be based upon accurate and honest information.'

Why are the politicians changing the rules?

The federal government can refuse a licence to operate should the approvals process not meet agreed standards. If the Howard government accepts a watered down approvals process for the pulp mill, will scrutiny of all future development proposals in Australia eg nuclear power stations, also be relaxed?

The planned RPDC process was to give the public an opportunity to contribute to the final pulp mill decision through public hearings. Will this right been taken away by Premier Lennon's new fast track legislation? Ministerial statement from Paul Lennon Tuesday October 26, 2004. "Mr Speaker, what I have described today is a highway code for anybody who wishes to develop a pulp mill in Tasmania. They are the rules that must be followed. They are the tests that will be applied to ensure that any proposal meets our requirement for environmental compatibility with everything that Tasmania stands for today." Who is running the State, the government or the pulp mill proponent?

Comment posted by former RPDC Pulp Mill panelist Dr Warwick Raverty on the Mercury's online forum Sunday 11am Jan 14, 2007. Comment 6 of 10.

<http://www.news.com.au/mercury/comments/0,22911,21051561-3462,00.html>. "... In my

personal opinion, this arrant political interference with a proper legal process should not be allowed to continue.....Events in the past two weeks have shown that the RPDC review process as it was prior to my resignation was one that was only going to be allowed by Paul Lennon to reach one conclusion. ...All delays in this review can be sheeted home directly to Gunns and the inappropriate actions of the Pulp Mill Task Force." Where does the blame lie?

Premier of Tasmania, Paul Lennon has stated that his senior staff will have had discussions with Gunns during 17-18 March 2007 about legislation to fast-track the Tamar valley pulp mill. It is part of the political process for governments to consult stakeholders about legislation, and then to prepare the legislation after that consultative process has occurred. But this is about preparing legislation in direct consultation with a private company or corporation which has an immediate interest in all aspects of the legislation, and in this case legislation which relates solely to the company and its financial profit. Is this behaviour an illegitimate abrogation of Australian constitutional and parliamentary processes?

### **Does a 'world scale' mill mean 'world scale' damage?**

A 'world scale' pulp mill means 'world scale' logging and pollution which means 'world scale' damage to the tourism industry, Bass Strait and fisheries, agriculture, recreational pursuits and our water catchments. Does the Prime Minister wish to be associated with 'world scale' damage?

The economic case presented by Gunns takes no account of the very high costs of the mill to Tasmania eg. losses in agriculture, tourism, fisheries, fine foods, wineries, etc. Until the economics of the situation are independently studied, no approval should be given.

The conversion of more farms to plantations will deplete our water supplies and suppress agricultural cash flows in rural communities. The conversion of good farmland to tree plantations at taxpayers' expense is a federal responsibility and should be stopped. If we lose 10% more of our farms (Gunns wants at least another 50,000 ha of farmland for plantations) then we lose 10% of our farm income and 10% of our downstream processing income worth over \$300 million per year.

Fishing grounds in Bass Strait are sensitive to pulp mill pollution. Fish markets are rightly concerned about a proposal that does not offer rigorous protection for the fishing industry. The Tasmanian industry is worth around \$450 million per year (DPIW and industry figures), much of it easily lost if we get a reputation for pollution. There should be no mill without rigorous protection, independent monitoring and effective enforcement.

Noxious and offensive odours are the usual the result of pulp mill activities. Even the RPDC process had no effective standards to prevent odours.

Particulates, particularly micro fine particules, are already high in the Launceston air shed. A community survey in Launceston 2006 found that 81% consider air pollution a very important issue. A pulp mill will make this situation significantly worse. No protection and compensation measures appear to be in place should a mill be approved.

Tourism is worth nearly a billion dollars a year to Tasmania and employs around 30 000 people. Massive forest clearance, multiple log trucks and bad smells could repel tourists from visiting the North. That could cost our economy 10% or more of tourism income. Will our politicians ignore this cost and favour a pulp mill instead?

Fine food and wines. 80,000 bottles of wine were returned to Chile when they opened a pulp mill. Consumers don't want to drink wine that might be tainted with pulp mill effluent. Don't take the risk with our industries.

Recreation activities in our forests will be impaired by the proposed rates of logging by Gunns. Most of our tourists come for natural scenery and natural recreation opportunities. Don't risk these industries.

The Federal Government has based federal approval on the outcome of the RPDC process and without that process, the Howard Government under the terms of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 must refuse to grant a licence to operate.

Will our decision makers ensure that the community, existing industries and agriculture will be protected from the impacts of a pulp mill and its associated plantations?

Will they work to ensure that a complete water budget for the mill and its wood supply be developed prior to any mill approval to assure that there is enough water available for everyone in the future?

Will the government ensure that any mill that may be approved is of a size suitable for Tasmania and its various resources?

### **Not enough water, who will miss out?**

The increasing demand for water in Tasmania already exceeds available supply from rivers, groundwater, dams and lakes. Rivers and lakes are drying up. Low river flows eg. South Esk, allow blue green algae blooms to develop and become a serious health risk. What protection to people and local industries will be offered against mill impacts and activities?

Our water supplies risk being over-allocated for decades to come by uncontrolled expansion of plantations. What guarantees will be given that our water will not be over-allocated?

Rainfall is expected to decline 10% in the north and east of Tasmania over the next 3 decades.

Thirsty fast growing tree plantations require large amounts of water for decades. Supplying nearly seven million tonnes of pulpwood per year to feed the proposed pulp mill and chip export markets will require about 1,100 GL/yr (based on data from DPIW, Gunns IIS, TasLUCaS hydrological model). Committing to that amount of water at a time when demand already exceeds supply, would be disastrous. ? Although domestic consumption in the central north is only 16 GL/yr, local councils are worried and are considering a requirement for home-owners to install water tanks to save water. Councils appear unaware of the enormous effect that plantations have on their water supply catchments.

Water used by plantations cannot be directly measured. It is lost before reaching streams and rivers and is unavailable to downstream users - agriculture, industry and towns. ? Plantation and mill operators should be charged a commercial rate for water used. Rain falling on plantations is a common resource but owners pay nothing for the water that they use which gives them another unfair advantage in any competition with other users of that same resource eg urban residents and agricultural irrigators. ? Forestry MIS schemes have a high impact upon the sustainability of overall water supplies and those who rely upon it. The pulp mill proposal is unsustainable without the promise of MIS subsidies and preferential and free access to water.

The mill will lock in both a 'world scale' rate of logging and 'world scale' water use with consequent risk of decades of poor river flows in Northern and Eastern Tasmania. The value

of Tasmania's water resource will rise eg. for irrigated crops, but the water consumed by plantations threatens the livelihood of thousands and the economy of the State. Over 15 years, the potential value of 1100 Gl/yr of irrigation water used to grow crops, is about \$8 billion but only \$2 billion if used for growing trees and sold as pulpwood. One ML of irrigation water adds \$500 to the value of crops at the farm gate (DPIW).