

**TAP and others\* grievance concerning the position of Timber Communities Australia (TCA) in the social chamber and not the economic chamber of FSC Australia.**

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION.**

Hyperlinked electronic document by TAP Research May 2013

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **TCA is 95% funded by the industry.**

Jim Adams testified under oath to the Legislative Council Select Committee on the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012 on 5 February 2013 in Hobart that 'industry has supported the TCA for the last 25 years. TCA's financial support in that time has been 95 per cent or maybe even more from industry, not from membership'(1). In our view this means TCA only exist because of the timber industry. What TCA claim to stand for becomes irrelevant because they are a creation of the logging industry and are totally dependent on it. If less than 49% of TCA's financial support came from the industry then possibly TCA could claim to be a 'community' organisation. They are not. They are a creation and a product of the industry. It is known that industry 'front groups' exist in Australia. In fact the first meetings of TCA were devoted to taking over other organisations. In 2012 FSC Chairperson [Jim Adams and others chose to over ride a vote of TCA Tasmania members.](#) To the TCA board the will of the 'community' must be irrelevant. We assert that TCA is an asset of the Australian Forest Products Association. [AFPA even carried out an audit of TCA in 2012.](#)

#### **The control of other chambers in FSC Australia.**

The economic chamber contains 69% of FSC Australia's total membership. It is larger than the other two together. Because each chamber has equal voting rights an incentive exists for the economic chamber to infiltrate the other chambers. TCA is an ideal vehicle to achieve this. Due to the imbalance of FSC membership in the economic chamber, isn't it inevitable for the industry to stack the other chambers? FSC Australia list Jim Adams as both an individual member in the social chamber and also as representing TCA as Chairman of FSC Australia. Why is he both? Jim Adams current chairmanship of FSC Australia would be illegitimate if TCA is in the wrong chamber. Please see our chart on the membership of FSC Australia's chambers. TCA was used as the address and phone

number of a [fake environment group called the Australian Environment Foundation.](#)

\* Includes a similar grievance by Kev Rothery

## HISTORY OF TCA

### Forest Protection Society

[The Forest Protection Society](#) is an Australian group that was established in 1987 with the support of the Forest Industry Campaign Association whose executive officer claimed



the funds were just to get it started but that it would be an independent community group. Yet some years later about 80% of the Society's funding was still coming from the Association. (Rowell 1996)

It shares the same postal address as the [National Association of Forest Industries](#), uses an industry spokesperson as a contact for job advertisements and uses the services of Burson-Marsteller. Yet the Forest Protection Society is listed as an 'Environmental Protection Organisation in the 1994 Directory of Australian Associations. Its fact sheets promote logging in rain-forests as "one of the best ways to ensure that the rain-forests are not destroyed." Burton claims to have uncovered minutes of a Forest Protection Society meeting where ways to take over meetings of local environment groups and distract them from their campaigning were discussed. [\(Burton 1994\)](#)

The Forest Protection Society aims to "Provide a national grassroots voice for people associated with or supportive of Australia's forest-based industries." Its national director, Chris Althaus, is a forestry graduate and founding staff member of the National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI)

<http://www.uow.edu.au/~sharonb/STS218/fronts/examples/fps.html>

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Timber Communities Australia National Association of Forest Industries](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Timber_Communities_Australia_National_Association_of_Forest_Industries). (Now FSC member Australian Forest products Association)

TCA was originally named the "Forest Protection Society" in 1987 when the group originated. The organization actually sought to protect a "forest-based economy," and, accordingly, after some confusion as to the organization's real purpose, it eliminated the word "protection" from its name when it changed its name to Timber Communities Australia, Ltd. [1]

## Background

In a February 2004, Australian Greens Senator, Bob Brown, sketched some of the activities and funding of Timber Communities Australia, Australia's longest running industry front group.

"When articles on the forests appear in print or go to air, there is an outcry from the forest industry. But what at first appears to be a broad based response to a media story is, in fact, a highly orchestrated campaign by a small cabal long linked by personal history and involvement with the woodchip industry and using an innocuous-sounding organisation called Timber Communities Australia, TCA, as a front to give it credibility," he told the Senate. TCA concerns itself with promoting what it calls "productive conservation" in the forest-based sector of the economy and "countering the misinformation promoted by those who seek to impose unrealistic, unfair and unnecessary levels of forest preservation and deny economic and community growth opportunities." This description indicates TCA is actually an economic-promotion group rather than a forest protection or preservation group. [2]

"Since its inception in 1987, TCA has been positioned as the voice of the little people caught between the conservation movement, governments and the large woodchip companies. It purports to be the authentic voice of those who are merely seeking to make a living and keep their jobs, to feed their families. Its advertisements feature stereotypes of the hard-working family--craftspeople, bee keepers, people in truck-stop cafes and children in the bush with their grandparents. Its web page says it is a grassroots organisation which exists to encourage the sensible, balanced multiple use of our forests for the benefit of all

Australians", he said.

"In fact, it is the brainchild and mouthpiece of NAFI, the [National Association of Forest Industries](#), headquartered in Canberra, the lobby group of Australia's logging and woodchip corporations. NAFI and Timber Communities Australia share a common headquarters in Canberra and a common executive director, [Kate Carnell](#)," he said.

"Timber Communities Australia is, in fact, an [astroturf](#) organisation, to use its own public relations jargon -- fake grassroots," he said.

Brown's speech drew a response from Queensland Senator and Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, Ian Macdonald. "Timber Communities Australia is a magnificent grassroots organisation. It is a group of ordinary Australians--if you can call them that--working in the industry, working in country communities, who are eventually getting their message across about the hypocrisy of the Greens and their very left-wing agenda," he told the Senate. [2]

In May 2006 a journalist with the *Mercury* newspaper in Tasmania, Sue Neales, wrote that "Timber Communities Australia says it represents the "timber folk" of Tasmania. It is closely linked to and partly funded by the [Forest Industries Association of Tasmania](#), which is in turn funded by timber industry corporate players, predominantly [Gunns](#)." [3]

## Funding

Brown told the Senate that the financial returns for TCA revealed its lack of grassroots support. "In 2001-02 only four per cent, or \$43,630, of Timber Communities Australia's income came from its members. Seventy-six per cent, or \$730,000 out of \$965,498, was from direct industry contributions. In the following year, 2002-03, direct contributions from industry to TCA rose to 86 per cent--\$734,154 of the total of \$838,977--and, conversely, member contributions fell by \$4,228 to only \$39,402," he said.

"NAFI's in-kind contributions to Timber Communities Australia, by way of space, salary and administrative assistance, were valued at a further \$67,891. In other words, industry contributions pay the wages of [Barry Chipman](#), Timber Communities Australia's ubiquitous Tasmanian spokesperson, and eight other staff around Australia," he told the Senate.

If TCA's operating expenses of \$838,000pa have not changed since 2002-03 and

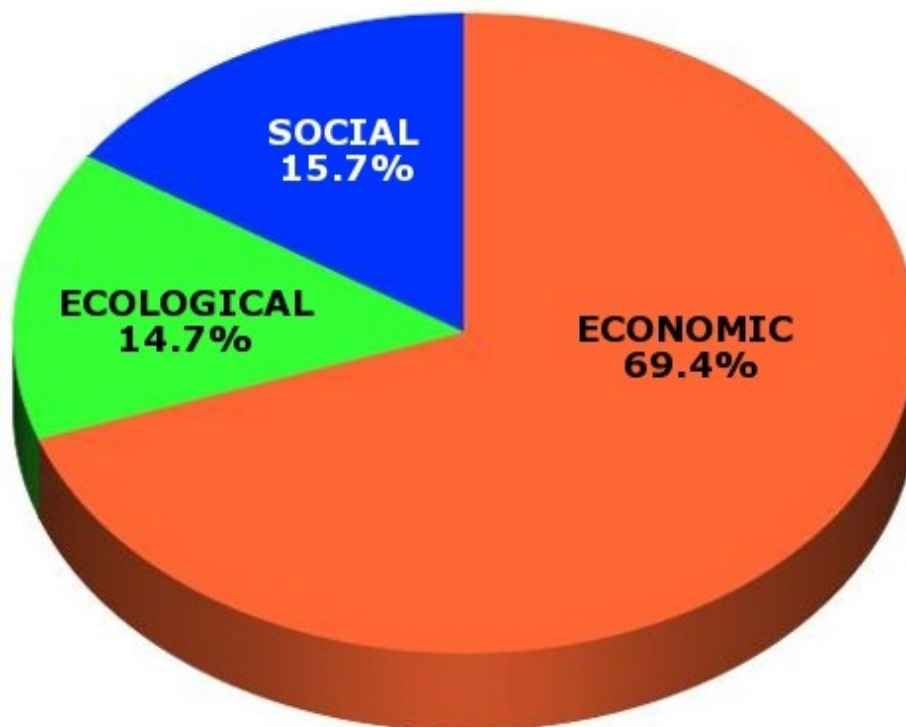
individual membership is \$25 then TCA would have 33,500 members. Instead it claims to have 'over 13,000' If membership contributions were \$40,000 in 02-03 why would they be 20 times higher in 2013? TCA is being externally funded.

## WHY THE ECONOMIC CHAMBER HAS AN INCENTIVE TO STACK THE SOCIAL CHAMBER

As you can see from the chart below the economic chamber has more members than the other two put together. Because voting at FSC is divided equally between the 3 chambers, there is an incentive for the economic chamber to stack the other two chambers. FSC Australia must recognise this fact and take action to ensure it does not happen. The logging industry in Australia is notorious for infiltrating other groups, creating 'astroturf' or front groups and incessant lobbying of and donations to decision-making authorities.

## FSC AUSTRALIA - MEMBERSHIP BY CHAMBER

At May 23 2013



## **WAS JIM ADAMS SUPPORTING THE INDUSTRY OR THE COMMUNITY IN THE TASMANIAN FOREST AGREEMENT?**

**Statements made by Jim Adams under oath before the Legislative Council Select Committee on the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012**

**FORESTS AGREEMENT BILL 2012, HOBART 15/1/13 AFTERNOON SESSION (ADAMS)**

'Because TCA exists to support industry'

'TCA exists to assist our communities to support industry'

"Dr GOODWIN - At the most recent series of meetings - there was one in the north and one in the south - the vote was not in support of continuing?"

Mr ADAMS - It was explained to the membership that there would be votes taken and those votes would go back and the board would make an ultimate decision. At both of those meetings the vote of the membership against the finding of the agreement was 4:1 - 75 per cent against and 25 per cent in favour.

Dr GOODWIN - What made the board decide? Is the board made up of local people or are they from the mainland?

Mr ADAMS - TCA is a national organisation and is made up of a board member from each state, two industry representatives [inaudible] on the board - Brett McKay attended with me in front of this Chamber on the last occasion we met. He is our Tasmanian board member. Essentially, the board's view in considering whether to sign the agreement was very mindful of the views of the membership. It did not make the decision lightly; a simple yes-no decision took an hour and a half to make. You may be aware the board reviewed that decision a couple of days later. The board's ultimate reason for making that decision was it believed TCA's role is to support industry and the industry position. TCA needed to be in support of the industry position on this matter. It also believed, however, and I think it was slightly unfairly suggested, the board had only voted yes to maintain some position, but that is not the case. The TCA board genuinely believed if at some point this goes through in an amended or unamended form TCA will be better

positioned to have been a signatory than not to have been a signatory because they felt it could more effectively represent the views of its members from that position going forward”.

[FORESTS AGREEMENT BILL 2012, HOBART 5/2/13 MORNING SESSION \(ADAMS\)](#)

'To that extent, we held a very extensive meeting of industry people. Many of the people who were at that initial meeting never came to any further meetings but an industry reference group was formed at that meeting and also agreed to participate in the process'

“Ms FORREST - Jim, last time we spoke you didn't have time to contemplate or consider the government amendment; can you give us TCA's view of that approach now? I'm not sure where the discussion has been had that we were told about a week ago with the initial durability report, which is a bit of stumbling block for FIAT, so if you could update us on that.

Mr ADAMS - I need to take that on notice because I am not myself exactly sure where within the industry group we have landed on that at this point in time.

Ms FORREST - With FSC certification there is a range of views about whether you really need it or not, whether the markets are really demanding it or not. It appears the market is in certain areas, but you are saying it is an important part of the durability, so that any fringe environmental groups would have to argue that FSC certification is a waste of time too.

Mr ADAMS - That is exactly what I am arguing. On the industry side of this discussion I don't think it is any secret that there is a strong level of support and there has been in the past some scepticism about FSC, but within the industry side of this discussion even some of those people represented on the industry group who are very strongly committed to AFS eventually came around to understanding that this is a very significant part of the durability. That is why we had to first get that supported within our side before we could even put it on the table as something to be supported by the other side.

Mr HALL - Could you clarify the exact role of the TCA? Last time you were here you indicated that the TCA exists to support industry. I would have thought that your role was to support your timber communities rather than industry, whereas you have an organisation like FIAT who represent industry per se. Also, you have just mentioned that in your role on the FSC board you were not there to represent industry, so I find it to be a dichotomy. I am confused as to where you are.

Mr ADAMS - You are not the only one who is confused. There are a number of members who struggled in the space. I need to take you back a little bit to the Forest Protection Society days when TCA was first formed. The TCA was formed in the days when the forest conflicts, if you like, were at their peak across the country, not just in Tasmania, particularly in places like the Otways and East Gippsland and southern New South Wales and so forth. Industry was basically locked, if you like, in a dispute with environmental groups and it was all over resource and access to forests. Communities were being affected by that but did not have a voice. The industry and the unions at that point in time said, 'Hang on a second. Here's a constituency which, if we can coordinate and mobilise them, can be very supportive of industry in its attempts to oppose the green movement'.

That is how TCA was formed. The TCA was formed to mobilise and to help coordinate community input into those processes in support of industry. For that reason, industry has supported the TCA for the last 25 years. TCA's financial support in that time has been 95 per cent or maybe even more from industry, not from membership, but the TCA has tried to help support its communities as well. It has been about trying to engage and help communities to mobilise themselves in support of industry. In the past that was pretty simple because it was always just about resource, and supporting industry meant opposing claims to lock up resource and that was very simple. A lot of people joined the



TCA at the time because that is what TCA was doing. Not all of them necessarily joined the TCA just for industry; some of them possibly joined the TCA to oppose pushes for reservation.

We have a wide range of members, a very broad spectrum of people in our organisation and some of them are possibly there more to oppose the green movement than support industry. In circumstances like this where it is not just about resources - it is also about market access - and supporting industry has come down to a decision about whether or not we want to support a reserve proposal, it has been a very difficult question for the membership but TCA has, does and always will exist to assist those communities who wish to support the industry.

Mr WILKINSON - I am not saying it to be against or otherwise, but it seems to be a bit of a moving feast. You entered into the agreement and then there were the negotiations that changed that and now this seems to be yet another change, yet the Legislative Council has been told, 'If you make any changes at all, the deal's off'.

Mr ADAMS - You're exactly right; it is a moving feast. There are a lot of different players exerting pressure on the way things are rolling out. What we are trying to do as individual organisations, and also as a caucus on our side, is to make sure if certain elements are moved that we maintain a balanced matching of those elements. If we can't stop something from moving in our own right then the best we can do is make sure that any benefit to the other side is matched by a benefit on our side.

Dr GOODWIN - You have just talked about the specialty timbers, the regional sawmill buyback,

the World Heritage nomination - the quit quo pro, if you like.

Mr ADAMS - It was the industry. It was our group that said, 'If this is going to happen then we need you to bring the stuff forward'.

## SUMMING-UP JIM ADAMS TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

The above evidence taken under oath was used to show that in the Tasmanian Forest Agreement Jim Adams always negotiated on the industry 'side'. He mentions this continually. So who represented the 'community' in the 3 year negotiations? It certainly wasn't Jim Adams, but Adams also represented FSC Australia before the Committee, he also represents himself in FSC Australia, he represents TCA and he even represents the 'signatories' to the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. He may wear many hats to suit the occasion but in Adams own words he is on the industry 'side'. FSC Australia may persist in semantics and the illusion of who Jim Adams and TCA really are but we are in no doubt that not only is TCA in the wrong chamber of FSC Australia but the perceived conflict of interest of the current Chairman has bought FSC Australia into disrepute. With 5 FSC Australia members on the 'Special Council' of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement helping implement a law that requires FSC certification and the last past FSC Australia Chairman Sean Cadman admitting he is working to help Forestry Tasmania attain FSC certification, how could any reasonable person arrive at any other conclusion than FSC Australia has stacked the Tasmanian Forests Agreement?

## SUMMING-UP THE TAP COMPLAINT CONCERNING TCA

We found clear evidence that TCA is not a 'community' group but an instrument of the Australian Forest Products Association to further their commercial interests. We found evidence TCA was used to form a front environment group. We found evidence FSC Chairman Jim Adams holds multiple 'conflicts of interest' in his role on the Tasmanian Forests Agreement that legislated FSC certification for Forestry Tasmania.

## References

1. <http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/Transcripts/5%20February%202013%20-%20Hobart%20-%20morning%20session.pdf>