

## Transcript of Malcolm Ryan's presentation "Unlocking the gates" 23/8/2002

Through the 70's I saw the power of the Hydro industry in Tasmania  
In the early 80's we saw the shift of this (power) to the Forestry Commission.  
In the late 80's we saw the culmination of this with the Rouse bribery affair and the subsequent pledges by the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania, FIAT, pledging \$40,000 in the re-election campaign and it goes on from there.

We've seen the shift of those power people through the early to mid eighties and now they are all in power positions in this state; in other words we have pecuniary interests running rife right throughout this state.

The plantation industry was being driven through the early 80's into the 90's by the expectation of a worldwide increase in paper use, especially in developing countries such as China. However, we seem to have underestimated the intelligence of China and other countries such as Uruguay, Peru, Chile, Argentina, who are all planting the same trees that we are planting at a massive rate, hence by the early 90's we started to hear the word "oversupply" come into use, and by the mid 90's we heard the term "carbon credits" and more recently we hear the term "wood fired power stations", they are just a means of justifying this plantation frenzy that is happening.

This is a Forestry Tasmania map that identifies the potential sites for plantation establishment.  
*(ref. overhead from Forestry Tasmania brochure)*

This is a land capability map sheet which identifies the land capabilities, prime agricultural land being classes 1, 2, 3  
class 1 is the red  
class 2 orange-brown  
class 3 yellow  
*(ref. Land Capability Assessment overhead)*

You have probably all heard of Preolenna in the North West; this area here is Preolenna. If we go back three years ago there were 7 intensively farmed properties in that region generating \$4.1M into the local economy. Forget it! It's all gone, it's all under trees. So if you work out a 12 year rotation of plantation verses 12 years of the agricultural production that was there, the plantations have got to turn over \$50M to equal what the farming would have put in.

The state agricultural policy was the one that got me going, when I saw under the definitions of agricultural uses, the terminology 'plantation forestry' as a defined use on prime agricultural land. It didn't mention anything about potatoes, milk production, carrots or peas but it specifically put in plantation forestry. This removes the discretionary powers of planning schemes.

And in this *(ref State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land)* it has a definition as our good judge (Slicer) earlier said under the definition of sustainable development within the State Policies and Projects Act

And if you read this;

<b>Sustainable Development</b> (Schedule 1, State Policies and Projects Act 1993)
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‘sustainable development’ means managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while:

- (a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
- (b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems; and
- (c) avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects on the environment.

Let us go back and apply that on the ground at Preolenna, it certainly hasn't happened there.

The Good Neighbour Charter on the bottom states, and it is signed off by these companies here (*ref. to Good Neighbour Charter*)

Evan Rolley Managing Director Forestry Tasmania	Arnold Willems Performance Manager, Fibre Norske Skog Paper Mills Aust. Ltd	Dr Michael Beardsell Chief Executive Officer North Forest Products	Keith Mitchelhill Executive General Manager Boral Timber
John Gay Managing Director Gunns Ltd	Tony Cannon Forestry Director Forest Enterprises Australia Ltd	Paul Nicholls Regional Manager Rayonier Tasmania Pty Ltd	

Endorsed by the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Kem Perkins, President TFGA

Where will tree farms be planted?

- We will only establish tree farms where permitted under the Forest Practices Act and in accordance with State policies and local government planning schemes.
- We will take account of community aspirations and issues in planning the development of new tree farms
- We will behave with honesty and integrity, through a transparent process, when negotiating with landowners for land purchase, land lease or share-farm activities

Let us again compare this with what happens on the ground, it doesn't happen.

That brings me to the 2020 vision which is a Federal Government and industry strategy aimed at increasing the plantation estate in this country from 1M in 1997 to 3 M hectares by 2020.

It states in the opening summary: (*ref. Plantations for Australia: 2020 vision*)

“The strategy aims to remove all cultural, technical, commercial and legislative impediments to plantation establishment.”

I won't elaborate on it.

And then we have the then Federal Minister for Forestry , Wilson Tuckey, who flies into town on August 18th 2000. A quote on the front page of Tasmanian Country newspaper; he later told Tas country that “Australia needed a plantation state, let's have an environmental fight and if the people say that they don't want investment money then tough for Tasmania.”

These are just some of the problems that have been occurring, there are others such as impacts on the cattle numbers. Which brings me to this study (*ref. Rural Economic Change Overview*) that was commissioned by our Forestry Minister, Mr Lennon, to look at the impacts on agriculture from plantation developments, to determine whether plantations were a driver or an outcome of rural change. This was completed in 2001 at the cost of \$50,000 and it said "in the state's north west which has the highest utilisation of land for private forest plantations, the data available does not suggest that private forest plantations have adversely affected the amount of land available for use for alternative agricultural uses".

Well we've seen late last year Blue Ribbon slip into liquidation, subsequently bought by Greenhams of Victoria. Greenhams have recently laid off 21 staff at Smithton because of cattle shortages, and they are bringing in half their kill numbers from interstate per week at the moment, this equates to around 500 cattle per week which are coming in to keep Blue Ribbon at Smithton going.

If people in Hobart don't think this affects them down here, Blunstone boots have also talked about moving interstate because they can't source enough hides to make their boots here.

You've heard enough about dislocation of communities and businesses. The crime rates are also going through the roof in these areas, the area of Preolenna for instance, and it is the same at Trowutta, Nietta, Wilmot and Eriba, wherever you would like to go back through the hinterland, the crime rate is increasing through the roof. We're seeing a social change occurring, from being a tight knit family farming community to a... well, in Preolenna's case we have seen the shift from a \$4.1M generator to a social welfare dependent community. The crime has gone through the roof, one of the residents recently was in Melbourne receiving treatment for a debilitating medical condition, in her absence one of the residents ransacked her house a put a match to it, this would never have happened in the past.

The Police in the 20 years leading up to 1998 had been called to the district maybe twice; in the first 8 months of 2000 the police attended no fewer than 14 times to incidents at Preolenna. So we have a huge social problem.

You've heard about the water catchments, I don't think I need to elaborate too greatly on that issue, except to say that on the plantation side of things, that in converting pasture to plantations it reduces the availability of water to the catchment by up to 80%, these are CSIRO and scientific statistics.

The decrease in land values. Mum doesn't want to go into an isolated community where there isn't a school or a Church or a shop, they want community so therefore we all know who wears the pants, they don't want to go into those areas.

Forestry Burn offs, a huge problem, Burnie this autumn was just blanketed and what recourse does the average person have. What avenue do we have to object to this, you ring an office, you ring a department, you achieve nothing, you get fobbed off, redirected or pushed aside "it's not our responsibility, it's theirs" *fait accompli*, you just put up with it. Yet if you're a land owner, other than forestry, and you burn a small pile, the next thing you get a tap on the door, a letter or prosecuted and we see recently that meat works in Launceston were shut down due to the smell, people had avenue of appeal. This is not the case with Forestry.

Removal of infrastructure in these areas where plantations move in, almost all infrastructure gets removed; out through Preolenna, Meunna and I'm only talking about one area here, I could talk about many others in the same way.

Roads: Burnie council recently allocated \$160,000 to upgrade a road up at Upper Natone where log trucks are carting logs from Lietier, through Upper Natone to the chip mill at Hampshire.

Lietier is crown land, the local government body receives no rate revenue from crown land, therefore the Burnie council is getting no revenue from that activity, and in contrast we have seen a \$200,000 cut in our parks and gardens maintenance.

The causes of this, as I have alluded to earlier, are pecuniary interests at a very high level, you only have to look where Marc Addis is currently, very high up in the department of infrastructure. He was head of the FIAT back in the late 80's. His secretary back in the 80's is now Minister Lennon's secretary. Where was Lennon, where was Bacon, where are those from the Rouse bribery affair, namely (Jim) McQuestin, (John) Gay, (Robin) Gray, all now at the head of Gunns. You also have (John) Gay on the Board of State Development, so if you want to get something done in an area where they have got forestry activities, forget it!

We need independent processes here, we need independent arbitrary systems, if you have a look at the Forest Practices Board and then have a look at Forestry Tasmania Board, obtain copies of last years annual reports, and up pop the same heads in both. They claim to be independent but where's the independence? We need to rid ourselves of this loaded system.

To do that we need to all increase our workloads in trying to get interstate people to assert pressure here, interstate media, anyone with a high profile or position of influence you need to get onto those people to champion the cause.

I don't see why I should have to jump onto a plane and go to Victoria and sit down with a QC for 6 hours to try and bring change.