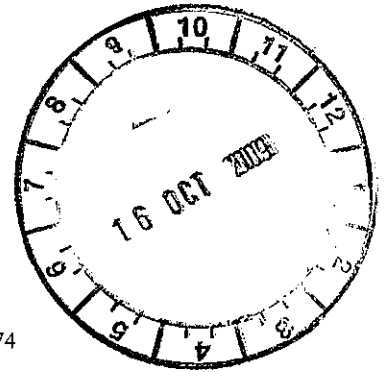




ALISON XAMON MLC

MEMBER FOR THE EAST METROPOLITAN REGION

P.O. BOX 104, MAYLANDS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6931
PHONE (08) 9275 7474 - MOBILE 0437 700 555 - FAX (08) 9275 7574
EMAIL alison.xamon@mp.wa.gov.au



SUBMISSION – LOGGING IN MUNDLIMUP COUPE 03

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the issues raised in the 'petition opposing logging in the Mundlimup Forest adjacent to Jarrahdale', tabled in the Legislative Council on 08 September 2009. I believe this issue is of sufficient public interest to warrant significant inquiry by the Committee.

I would like to use this submission to draw the Committee's attention to some of the broad public concerns surrounding the future of the forests in the Jarrahdale area, which are under stress from a number of directions. Jarrahdale's identity and future are closely tied to the future of the forests. Damage and destruction of the forests will have strong negative impacts on the community.

Jarrahdale - timber town

Jarrahdale is located some 50km south of Perth, in the Darling Range. Jarrahdale has been making a living from the forests since very shortly after the area was first settled. The first timber mill started operating in 1872 and with very few breaks, Jarrahdale was a timber milling town for over 100 years.

In 1997, the last timber mill closed, Alcoa ceased mining nearby and Jarrahdale was declared a historic town, one of only 7 in Australia. In the 12 years that the primary industries have been closed, Jarrahdale has repositioned itself as a popular tourist destination, uniquely located in jarrah forest within a one hour drive from Perth city. The combination of easily accessible historic sites and buildings and the visual appeal of the rejuvenated jarrah forest attract a wide range of tourists. Popular activities in the Jarrahdale forests include hiking, cycling and other forms of eco-tourism.

Jarrahdale residents have worked extremely hard to develop this industry to address the limited employment opportunities available in the community.

Logging in Mundlimup Coupe 03

Mundlimup Coupe 03 is within 1km of the Jarrahdale townsite and is the location of logging proposed by the Forest Products Commission for 2009. Mundlimup Coupe 03 was last logged 70 years ago and contains regrowth forest interspersed with old growth trees (mostly giant marri and some big old jarrah considered unsuitable for sawmilling). The forest is home to endangered species such as the Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo.

Logging in the forest will leave devastation behind. Even the relatively benign-sounding 'selective logging' entails the use of a machine that will leave a wide swath of destruction to and from any particular tree and is utterly indiscriminate in the removal of all understorey.

Parts of the Mundlimup Coupe 03 forest are already infested with *Phytophthora dieback* and the community is very concerned that this disease will be spread by logging. The sanctions that apply for breaching dieback hygiene requirements are seen to be weak and an insufficient deterrent. Dieback

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will kill many forest plants and seriously weaken the ability of the forest to support a healthy flora and fauna.

The visual appeal of the logged area will be reduced to zero, substantially decreasing the value of the forest for tourism activities. The noise of logging machinery at such close range may also have a negative impact on the town, as will the increase in heavily laden logging trucks in and around the townsite.

Economic return on logs

Concerns have also been raised regarding the revenue to the Forest Products Commission that would be generated by this logging. The price the FPC charges for sawlogs is very low, and fears have been raised that the logs are only being removed to meet contracts that will not cover the costs to the State of the logging operations.

It is not only the FPC that incurs costs due to native forest logging. The Department of Environment and Conservation plays a big role in planning and preparing logging operations and on-going forest management and is not fully compensated for its costs while the Conservation Commission is also involved through the establishment of Fauna Habitat Zones and auditing the performance of the FPC and the DEC. These costs represent hidden subsidies to the FPC and native forest logging industry.

Other threats to Jarrahdale forests

The forests around Jarrahdale are under threat from a number of directions.

The Wungong catchment trial to investigate the effect of forest thinning on surface water flows has been underway for only a few years. The trial is planned to take place over a 10 year period and if successful, the forests in the Wungong catchment are likely to be repeatedly thinned and burnt, reducing their value as a recreational site to the community.

Alcoa is due to resume bauxite mining near Jarrahdale from 2011. Open cut bauxite mining completely devastates the forest. While Alcoa has a reasonable record in rehabilitating known jarrah forest plant species, it makes no claims about its ability to fully restore the unknown microbial and fungal species that are an important part of a healthy forest.

Beyond these immediate threats, there is also the looming impact of climate change to be considered.

Recommendation to the committee

The logging of Mundlimup Coupe 03 cannot be considered in isolation. It is one of a number of threats to the forests in the area, all of which will have an adverse impact on the ecology of the forest. In this context, any logging has the potential to damage the businesses in Jarrahdale that rely on unspoiled forests for their survival.

Please consider banning logging within Mundlimup Coupe. This will cover the majority of the area used by Jarrahdale tourists and businesses that require unspoiled forest for successful operation. Combined with the protection provided by the nearby Serpentine National Park, this should be sufficient to protect the nearby forests most vital to the town's businesses.

I would further request that the committee assess and investigate the finances of the Forest Products Commission. I would expect the FPC, as the manager of the sale of publicly-owned forest products in this state, to be generating surplus revenue to reinvest in the forests.