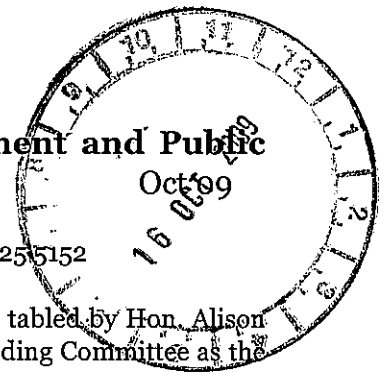


Submission to Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - Logging of Mundlimup Coupe 03

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on our petition tabled by Hon. Alison Xamon MLC on 8th Sept. We ask for an opportunity to address the Standing Committee as the issue is complex involving two government departments who in their answers to questions in Parliament we feel have been less than frank.

Context : The town of Jarrahdale grew in the late 1800s as a company town around timber milling started by the Wanliss brothers who obtained a very large timber concession of some of the best jarrah forest in the SW. Successive mill owners were Millars then Bunnings who closed the sixth mill in 1998 with three weeks notice to the 44 workers, with no reaction from an industry whose *raison d'être* seems to be the protection of jobs. The town at that time was still based around timber and the local bauxite mine which closed a few years after. Since then there has been some limited urban and larger residential subdivisions which along with greater accessibility to Perth, and Jarrahdale Rd becoming a through route to the Albany highway, have made the town more outward looking. Several venues which attract visitors have opened (eg Millbrook Winery). The local heritage group promote the timber history and in partnership with DEC/CALM have opened up many walk trails which have become very popular. These celebrate the landscape, flora and fauna, forest, scenic views and logging history of the area. The popular Munda Biddi Track (for cyclists) passes through the town. There is a walk trail connecting to the Bibbulmun Track. The local shire in partnership with the National Trust are developing a major Heritage Park on old timber company land and have a "Brand Jarrahdale" concept to promote the town's tourism values. Recently launched by the Minister for Tourism was a Serpentine Valley promotion for the area.

Changed values: It is obvious the values ascribed to the adjoining forest have changed dramatically. There is sufficient local data to assess the growth in walkers to be tenfold over the last decade. The growth in individual forms of recreation was said to be 12% in last four years at the latest Sport and Recreation Conference, compared to 3% in team sports, which corroborates local data. There has also been a trend to high value use of native timbers with a local small mill using largely rescued logs for this. There is a much greater appreciation of our unique environment and a growing recognition of the importance of the SW as a global biodiversity hotspot (Meyers, 2000). The obvious importance of natural areas for relaxation and spiritual well being is well known. In an area so close to Perth and with an expanding local population (two towns of 30K each planned in Serpentine-Jarrahdale) an intact forest surrounding Jarrahdale will be needed.

Other threats: Another important context is that the Wungong Thinning Trials in which most trees in a large part of the catchment are being poisoned in an apparently futile attempt to achieve more run-off, is just a bit further down Jarrahdale Rd (not an attractive sight). The only entry from Jarrahdale to the Serpentine National Park, including a popular camping spot, has been closed for four years or more while FPC remove some pines. There is to be further mining by Alcoa south of Jarrahdale in a few years. The area north and east of Jarrahdale (including some of Mundlimup coupe) has already been extensively mined resulting in clearfelling of over 50% of forest.

Mundlimup: The coupe proposed to be logged (03 this year, 04 in the following years) was last logged in the 1930's and thus has some stands of reasonable sized trees but these are still nowhere near mature nor representative of original forest. The coupe adjoins the town and is one of the most used areas for the forest experience. It contains popular walk trails and has potential for more. These include remnants of original logging history such as log landings and sawpits. It is used for educational purposes by schools because of this.

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Mundlimup was a Scientific Management Priority Area (MPA 8-9) with measurement plots dating back to 1928. Some of these are now called 'Incremental Measurement Plots'. Apparently most of the MPAs were converted to National Parks with the advent of the Forest Management Plan. It contains 1928 thinning plots of original 1875 logging, stem thinning of 1937, growth plots and Havel site vegetation plots. This is an important monitoring site, especially with a decreasing rainfall. Alcoa Declined to mine it because of this and its proximity to the town (personal communication, past Mine Manager). This would seem a valuable scientific resource which should be protected, not logged. It is also a breeding and feeding area for the State and Federally listed Vulnerable Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoos (this listing has not altered the FMP approach), also present are the Endangered Baudin's, and the Vulnerable Carnaby's Cockatoos.

Future: The Serpentine-Jarrahdale Shire with DEC and Water Corporation have developed a Discovery Forest concept for much of this area and it is now proposed to include a 'Living Museum' component where traditional logging methods could be displayed. In economic terms this concept would have a longer term gain than current timber harvesting (\$2,000 p.a. for whole of Mundlimup), based on tourist, scientific and educational usage.

Unsustainable forestry: Current mechanical logging methods used by Forest Products Commission (FPC) are very destructive of soil composition, surrounding flora and even standing trees (machinery damage to trunks leads to poor timber potential) as well as being visually repulsive for several years. Experience elsewhere (eg Yabberup coupe) shows FPC and contractors' practices do not comply with guidelines. The mid-term Audit on Reporting of the Forest Management Plan to the Conservation Commission shows an alarming degree of non-compliance and lack of any penalties for it. It is known that the size of tree being harvested is decreasing – this alone shows that there is not sustainable logging as claimed. The estimated yield from the Swan Region was 44% less than predicted (Supplemental Advice to Conservation Commission - <www.conservation.wa.gov.au>) - which seriously questions any assumption of sustainable production, let alone "ecologically sustainable forest management" – on which the FMP is based. There are so many questions as to the cost/benefits of 'timber harvesting' as to would warrant an Auditor-General's report. Certainly the worth in carbon storage of hardwoods has not been considered in WA though results in Mountain Ash forests show it is considerably higher than rain forest; and that there is substantial potential for carbon sequestration in logged forest if left to regrow¹. There is talk of protecting the carbon value of Western Woodlands. ² Carbon is retained in sawn timber but not in wastage nor firewood which can be more than half. Research in WA is needed and a precautionary principle should be applied in the interim. Even allowing for the uncertainties of climate change there will be an effect on forest recovery. It seems totally inappropriate to destructively log an established area of forest highly valued by the community when there is probably a greater financial return in its retention.

Request of Committee: While the Forest Management Plan has until 2013 before its next iteration, the changing nature and values of Jarrahdale and general community needs were not taken into account in the 2004 Plan (though they were flagged by the Shire). Nor is anyone considering the impact of all the assaults on Jarrahdale (mentioned above). We would contend that there should be a five kilometre buffer around the town that can accommodate some of the expected increase in demand for walk tracks and an area for scientific study of forest growth and logging practice in a changing climate. The community desires the re-establishment of a true forest for future generations and wants to ensure this is possible. If Mundlimup is logged now the potential to develop all this will be lost. We seek the Committee's consideration of this and its intervention through the parliamentary process.

² Pew Environment Group – *West Australian*, 5/10/09

¹ Brendan Mackey et al, Green Carbon, 2009, ANU



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