

Secretary: *A/B*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
AND FORESTRY

Attention Mrs Kay Elson - Committee Chairman

Dear madam,

Background

I live in a small rural community in Tasmania called Lorinna. Lorinna has no HEC power supply. Most people living here (farmers and others) use a combination of solar and micro - hydro power with 'top up' power coming from household generators. In the early 1990's some community members applied for, and were granted, some funds from the Commonwealth Government to install a Community Information Centre.

To power the computer, photocopier and printer, a small power grid was set up with the source of power being a pelton wheel in Oliver's creek. Eight other families living along the supply cable, shared some of the costs and were also connected to the power.

When this scheme was assessed, the minimum water flow in Oliver's Creek was assessed at **more than 5 litres per second** at the driest time of the year. This was sufficient to operate the pelton wheel, and supply the system. This creek also supplies the drinking water for at least half the households in Lorinna.

About 1993, Forestry Tasmania clear felled all the native forest around the headwaters and catchment of Oliver's Creek, and established a plantation of fast growing Eucalyptus Nitens. This activity was opposed by the people of Lorinna, but ignored by Forestry Tasmania.

Today, the flow in Oliver's Creek has **fallen by over 80%** in the driest part of the year. The assessed flow is **less than 1 litre per second**, and this is insufficient to power the pelton wheel. Consequently the community power supply will not function and the Community's "On Line" Internet Centre cannot function without supplementary solar power which the community has had to finance.

Forestry clearfelling/plantation activity in our watershed has reduced our available water in summer by around 80%.

Our situation illustrates the importance of protecting our watersheds from damage and destruction by forestry activities.

These destructive forestry activities are **promoted by the Commonwealth through its Regional Forest Agreement**, where there is **no protection for watersheds**, and **no requirements to assess the permanent damage to water resources** in the context of extensive clearfelling of native forests.

***We call on the Commonwealth to immediately review as a matter of urgency, via a Royal Commission, the damage and destruction caused by clearfelling community watersheds, thereby drastically reducing the supply of water in rural Australia.**

*We call on the Commonwealth to immediately review as a matter of urgency its policy regarding the Regional Forestry Agreements with all states to ensure total protection of all water catchments, that supply water for domestic consumption and other purposes.

*We hereby put the Commonwealth on notice, that the effect of its Regional Forestry Agreement with the States, is to encourage clearfelling of native forests in water catchments, and that this policy and programme is severely damaging current and future water availability and consequentially its use, in rural Australia.

*If the Commonwealth endorsed a policy and programme of selective harvesting and maintenance of native forests in water catchments in Australia, as opposed to clearfelling and plantation establishment, then the interests of the forestry industry would continue to be served, and other rural Australians would not be disadvantaged.

*We believe that the CSIRO is adequately researching climate variability and adequately predicting weather changes. They advise increasing reductions in overall rainfall, a higher proportion of rainfall occurring in winter, and more severe rainfall events. All this adds up to the importance and urgency of protecting water catchments by retaining a cover of bio diverse forests, so that the rain that does fall, is trapped and released gradually for greater year round availability and use by rural Australia.

Yours Faithfully,

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