

T H E T A S M A N I A N P U L P M I L L N E W S

CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER FROM THE TASMANIAN GREENS STATE PARLIAMENTARIANS



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A MESSAGE FROM THE TASMANIAN GREENS' STATE MPs

Welcome to the final edition of the Greens' *Pulp Mill News* for 2006 and congratulations to everyone on a very successful year of campaigning.

Although there is still a long way to go it feels as if all the hard work, letter writing, marching, calls to talk-back radio, and singing (not to mention boating) has resulted in a 'tipping point' being reached and public opinion is finally swinging against the pulp mill, overtaking the frantic peddling of government and industry propaganda.

It has been an extraordinary year with highlights being over 8000 citizens marching in a huge show of community sentiment opposing the polluting mill, 780 submissions being received by an overwhelmed RPDC during the public comment period, and a fantastic Pulp Mill Armada taking to the Tamar River, not to mention extraordinary moments such as Gunns revealing in the last weeks of the public comment period on their Integrated Impact Statement (IIS) that Toxicos had underestimated the level of dioxin produced by the mill by 45 times!

On the political front it has been a very full year in parliament and we have raised the issue of the pulp mill at every opportunity, most recently objecting to legislation amending the *Resource Planning and Development Commission Act 1997* to prohibit disruption 'in or near' any RPDC hearing. Whilst we didn't object to the 'in' part, the 'or near' smacked of stifling legitimate public dissent and fortunately the Upper House saw our point and struck that particular clause out of the legislation. Be assured that we will continue to bring the matter up in parliament.

The recent bushfires have provided a perfect example of real time Tamar Valley airshed modelling as smoke pollution emanating from the vicinity of the proposed pulp mill site submerged Launceston suburbs in a pollution cloud. Gunns will be pumping out the pollution and we will be breathing it in - no thanks!

We were also very active, organising public meetings and information sessions at Dilston, Rowella, and Launceston, as well as a submission writing workshop at the Green Room in Charles St.

All the groups and individuals working for something better than this ill-conceived pulp mill must be congratulated for their fantastic work and no doubt all involved will enjoy a well-earned Xmas break before regrouping for a fresh fight in 2007.

So from myself, Peg Putt, Nick McKim, Tim Morris and all on the Green Team - thanks for all your work and see you in the New Year.

Peg, Nick, Kim and Tim

GREENS PULP MILL CONTACT



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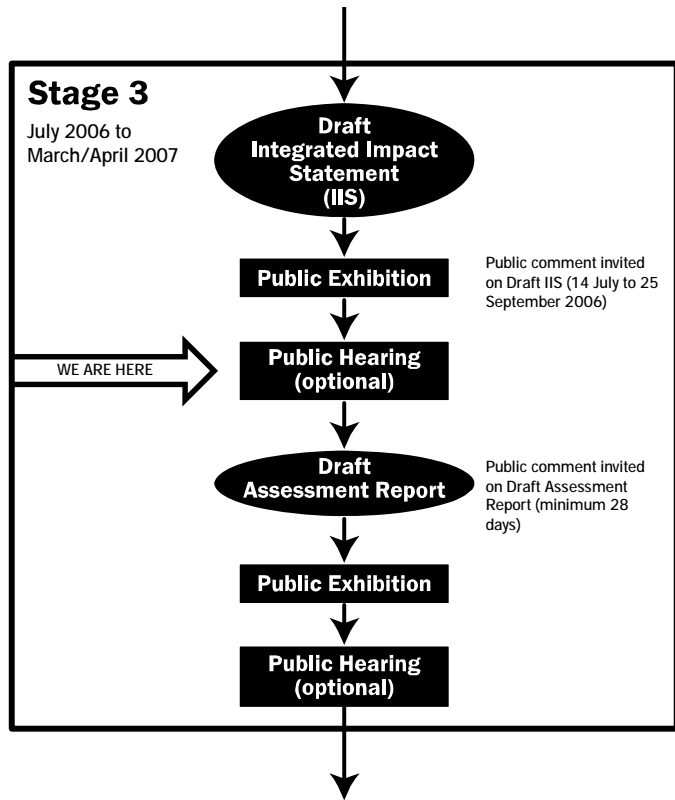
www.tas.greens.org.au

RPDC PoSS PROCESS

The Lennon Labor government declared the Gunns' proposal a Project of State Significance (PoSS). The PoSS approval process denies the right to appeal; once a PoSS is decided, that is it for the public! This is counter our usual planning processes which allow appeals to be made regarding the decision. What's more troubling about the PoSS process is that the final approval, the last step in the process, actually rests with the Premier, Paul Lennon.

The Resource Planning and Development Commission (RPDC) administers the four major stages of the PoSS process. Currently we are at the later part of Stage 3 (see graphic below) with the public hearings now getting underway regarding the Draft IIS.

The first of these was the directions hearing, held on the 25th of October. This hearing resulted in the RPDC issuing Gunns with directions for further information –with a deadline of the 15th of December.



Check the RPDC website for updated information, hearings transcripts, and consultants reports etc, as these hearings progress.

Following submissions from the public the RPDC prepares a Draft Assessment Report that is then released for public exhibition and comment.

This is the last chance for the community to have a say on the proposal in the PoSS process.

For more information on the RPDC POSS process see: http://www.rpdc.tas.gov.au/projects_state_signif/pulp_mill/pm_dw/Integrated_Assessment_Information_Brochure_130706.pdf

Water, Plantations and the Pulp Mill

The tentacles of Gunns' proposed pulp mill stretch far beyond the Long Reach site and one of the key resources the pulp mill will devour is water. This is not simply the 26 billion litres per year¹ of fresh clean water that the mill will convert into a poisonous chemical cocktail and pump into Bass Strait, but more importantly the long-term impacts on areas such as groundwater supplies that are so far unquantified and largely ignored.

The wholesale clearfelling of water efficient mixed native forests in upper catchments and their replacement with short rotation plantations, combined with the avalanche of plantations now consuming family farms in the north east and north west has led to a pincer movement on long term water supplies that see them under grave threat.

Gunns clearly state in their Draft IIS that they are after a total of 150,000 hectares² of thirsty plantations. It appears that Gunns intends to access farmland whilst similarly consuming millions of tonnes of natural water infrastructure (in the form of mixed age native forests) as primary feedstock for the pulp mill.

We are at risk of sending our water budget into long-term deficit at a time of confirmed and accelerating climate change.

Water is front and centre of this pulp mill debate and must continue to be so, as David Leaman pointed out,

"So it is no good farmers saying, 'where is my water?' It's gone, and it is this sort of thing which isn't being planned...It is not mentioned at all in the IIS..."³

STOP PRESS: RPDC DIRECTIONS HEARING / IIS LATEST

A deadline of 15th December was set for Gunns to produce supplementary material to the RPDC. This is meant to cover deficiencies in their Draft Integrated Impact Statement (IIS) which were identified by the RPDC as a result of their analysis and consultants' advice, plus the Directions Hearing of 25th October held in Launceston.

The new material will not be integrated into a new, upgraded IIS as requested by the Wilderness Society and ourselves, but will instead be in the form of supplementary documents which are meant to contain cross references to the parts of the IIS they replace or alter in some way. Seems like a recipe for a dog's breakfast.

At the time of writing we had not yet seen Gunns' new material, and apparently it may not be circulated to us for some days. Also, the RPDC have apparently indicated that they will take some time to check out what they've been given, and will not put the latest up onto their website until mid-January.

Don't panic! We argued at the Directions Hearing that the timeline for public consultation on this new stuff musn't happen over Christmas and New Year, and this way it can't.

We still await a determination on whether the impacts of logging forests for the pulp mill will be assessed in full, whether Gunns will be asked to provide the additional information we seek on economics, whether air quality data for the Tamar will be made public, and whether our argument that one of the Commissioners should remove himself will be upheld.

Excerpt of RPDC's Executive Commissioner's Opening Statement

"A considerable amount of work needs to be done by the proponent to satisfy the requirements of the scoping guidelines and address deficiencies, omissions and obvious corrections in the draft IIS... But before the process gets to the stage of a final IIS, the proponent needs to consider how it is going to present further documentation addressing matters listed in my letter of 2 October, the major issues raised from the State Government and public submissions and matters raised in the Commission's consultants' reports."

Source: Transcript of Proceedings, Resource Planning And Development Commission, Directions Hearing Pulp Mill Assessment, Launceston, 25 October 2006, page 9.

For the entire Transcript, submissions to the Draft IIS, Consultants reports etc see the RPDC website at: www.rpdc.tas.gov.au/projects_state_signif/pulp_mill/pm_docs/pm_whats_new.htm

AIR POLLUTION

The Tasmanian Greens introduced a motion to the Tasmanian Parliament highlighting the chilling report recently completed by the Federal Department of Environment which indicated that approximately 25 people per year are dying in Launceston as a result of polluted air. The motion called for an immediate moratorium on any new sources of air pollution in the Tamar Valley to be implemented, as part of a Tamar Valley Clean Air Action Plan.

Greens Member for Bass, Kim Booth MHA, said that the federal report compounded the already alarming findings of the State Government's Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy 2006 which found that up to eight people per year were dying as a result of pollution and that the time for urgent action had now arrived.

HOWARD GOVT PRE-EMPTS PULP MILL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Serious questions surround the Howard government's decision to give \$2.6 million to Gunns to facilitate preliminary engineering works for the proposed pulp mill while the project is still being assessed for approval.

During the 2004 federal election, Prime Minister Howard promised Gunns \$5 million to assist with a feasibility study for a plantation-based, chlorine-free pulp mill.

Yet Greens' Senator Christine Milne points out that Gunns' promise of plantation-based and chlorine-free was dropped in favour of native forest and chlorine dioxide but the federal promise of \$5 million of public money for Gunns remains.

"The federal government is handing over cash to pay for 'preliminary engineering works' before the (RPDC) has even assessed the project," Senator Milne said.

REFERENCES

1. Gunns' Draft IIS, Volume 1b, Part 6: <<http://gunnspulpmill.com.au/iis>>, p 6-421.
2. Gunns' Draft IIS, Volume 1b, Part 6: <<http://gunnspulpmill.com.au/iis>>, p 6-222.
3. D. Leaman, Transcript, ABC Radio, Statewide Mornings, 3 Aug. 2006

LINKS

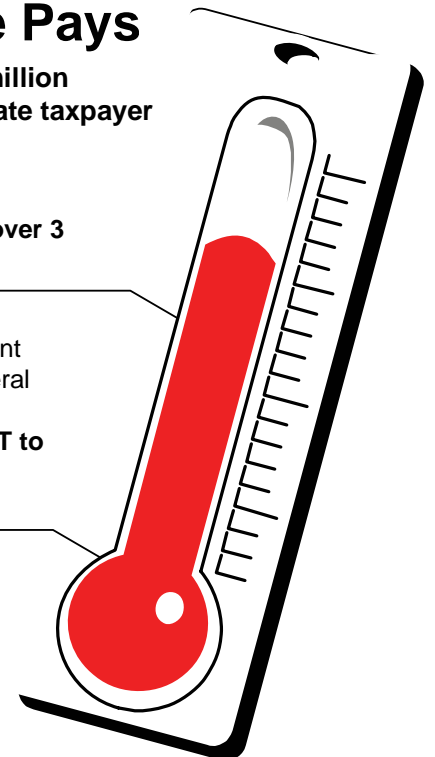
- Gunns' Draft Integrated Impact Statement - <<http://www.gunnspulpmill.com.au/iis>>.
- Resource Planning and Development Commission's pulp mill web page - <http://www.rpdc.tas.gov.au/projects_state_signif/pulp_mill/pm_docs/pm_whats_new.htm>
- Tasmanian Greens State Parliamentarians pulp mill submission - <http://tas.greens.org.au/issues/focus_on/index.php?Campaigned=182>
- Greens Senator Christine Milne's pulp mill campaign page - <http://www.christinemilne.org.au/300_campaigns_sub.php?&deptItemID=16>

Public Purse Pays

A total so far of \$11.5 million Commonwealth and State taxpayer funded subsidy.

State Lennon government **an additional \$6 million over 3 years**

Federal Howard government promised during 2004 federal election **\$5 million + \$500,000 GST to Gunns for a pulp mill proposal**



WHAT YOU CAN DO

A united, informed community *can* defeat this mill.

Attend the RPDC Public Hearings...

... the Resource Planning and Development Commission has begun the public hearings process into the Draft IIS. Details of hearings dates, times and location can be found at: <www.rpdc.tas.gov.au>. Monitor this website also for transcripts of the hearings, plus additional information and consultant reports...

Contact the media

Letters to the editors and calls or e-mails to talk-back radio make a big difference. This helps politicians gauge public opinion PLUS keeps the community debate moving forward.

Letters to the Editor

The Mercury

Macquarie St, Hobart 7000

Fax: (03) 6230 0711

E-mail: mercuryledletter@dbl.newstld.com.au

The Examiner

PO Box 99A, Launceston 7250

Fax: (03) 6334 7328

E-mail: editor@examiner.com.au

Advocate

56 Mount St, Burnie 7320

Fax: (03) 6498 7852

E-mail: letters@theadvocate.com.au

Talk-Back Radio

ABC Mornings is the local Tasmanian daily talk-back radio program.

ABC Tasmania

Local Talkback - (9am - 12noon)

Ph: 1300 222 936

E-mail: tasmornings@your.abc.net.au

Also keep an eye on <www.tas.greens.org.au> for updated information.

Meet with your elected representatives

The Lennon Labor Government, the Tasmanian Liberal Party, Federal ALP leadership and the Howard Government back the proposed Gunns mill. Over summer make appointments to speak with as many of your elected reps as possible! Be prepared with facts and figures on the issues that matter most to you when attending the meeting to ensure they must listen to you!

STATE PARLIAMENT

c/o Parliament House, HOBART 7000

Contact details for members of the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council can be found at:

www.parliament.tas.gov.au

FEDERAL PARLIAMENT

c/o Parliament House, CANBERRA 2600

Contact details for members of the House of Representatives and the Senate can be found at:

Tasmanian House of Representatives

www.aph.gov.au/house/members/mi-state.asp

Tasmanian Senators

www.aph.gov.au/Senate/senators/homepages/index.asp?sort=state

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