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Topic 1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

I believe the current and future forestry is sustainable if it is to remain under control of Forest NSW.

Topic 2. Environmental and cultural values of forests, including threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values

These have been accounted for in the current forest operations we have now.

Topic 3. Demand for timber products, particularly as relates to NSW housing, construction, mining, transport and retail

Timber industries is booming - can not keep up with demand, due to lack of area that we have for harvesting.

Topic 4. The future of softwood and hardwood plantations and the continuation of Private Native Forestry in helping meet timber supply needs

Yes Private Native Forestry is helping meet timber supply needs at the moment.
Obtaining a PVP and PNF insures the correct management of of the land.

I would like to remind you that politicians come and go but people that live in these small communities are here for generations.

They are sick of being bullied and lied to about their own history and heritage.

We are not getting 2,400 people a day visiting this national park, which NPWS enlisted Roy Morgan to research. [REDACTED]

These trees did not need to be locked up for protection after decades of logging and grazing.

Decades of logging, grazing (fire protective) and thinning, is what made them magnificent.

I'm sorry if I sound sceptical – but we only seem to hear from politicians if they want something.

You have already taken our manmade forests that our people before us shaped and grew. Which was the heart and sole of our community.

I'm not sure what you want but we have nothing left to give.

Phantoms of the forest

Once upon a time when visitors to national parks could be clearly seen and spoken to by the park rangers their visit was noted in some kind of journal and in due course was reported to head office who compiled the numbers for most parks and included them in the agency's annual report to Parliament and the tax-paying public. In fee-charging parks the figures might be based on the number of receipts issued.

Please note that these were visible visitors; today we have a different kind of tourist. They are virtual visitors, extrapolated extras who may or may not exist in the shadowy underworld of the computer spreadsheet.

Basically the system that can produce figures like 710,791 visitors to the Murray Valley Red Gum National Park in a single year works like this.

A computer generates a random list of the phone numbers of thousands of people who are then called and invited to participate in a survey.

One of the first questions those who agree to take part are asked goes something like this.

“In the past month have you visited a national park in New South Wales?”

If they answer “yes” they are then asked more questions to establish which park/s they entered and perhaps what they did there; “no” answers are politely excused from further participation.

Since 2008 a prominent polling company, Roy Morgan Research, has conducted such a survey every two years for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

On page 1 of *Annual Visits to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Managed Parks & Reserves 2016 State Report*, in the Executive Summary, they state that the overall sample size was 15,683 persons interviewed over 13 periods which are called “waves,” averaging around 1200 contacts.

But on page 33 of the report there is a table, 3.3.1, which gives a breakdown of the interviews conducted with those 15,683 people.

Only 2137 actually had the full interview.

13,546 told the interviewer at the outset that they had NOT visited a NSW national park in the past four weeks *and were therefore excluded from the survey.*

So from a sample of just 2137 people, representing all of the survey area from southern Queensland to Victoria, they have extrapolated the extraordinary figure of 710,791 visits to the Murray Valley National Park. And then predicted that it will continue to be in the top 20 of NSW National Parks.

710,791 visits to Murray Valley NP equates to an average of almost 2,000 visitors **per day**. I think we'd have noticed!

Bob Carr told Balranald it could expect 1,000 visitors a week. I doubt they see that many in six months.

Here's an interesting disclaimer from a similar report, dated June 2016, from the same company explaining why some rules had recently changed (bolding is mine):

*Please note that wave-by-wave analysis of visitation by Branch, whilst presented in this report, **is subject to large sampling errors**. As a consequence, seasonal fluctuations in visitation should be treated as indicative and any conclusions made treated with caution.*

And on page 4 of the same document (bolding is mine):

*Please note that wave-by-wave analysis of visitation by Branch, whilst presented in this report, **is subject to large sampling errors**. As a consequence, seasonal fluctuations in visitation should be treated as indicative and any conclusions made treated with caution.*

No such disclaimer is included in the full report, dated May 2017.

For the technically-minded this appears to be an explanation of how they calculated the numbers:

Whilst this survey was not designed to calculate the number of annual visitors to NSW NPWS parks, using the average number of visits per adult to NSW NPWS parks, a proxy for the number of adult visitors can be calculated. In 2008 the proxy number of adult visits to NSW NPWS parks was 10.4m; in 2010 it was 9.5m; in 2012 it was 10.5m (higher than 2008 levels), in 2014 it was 10.8m and in 2016 it was 16.0m. This pattern does precisely match the overnight visitation pattern sourced from TRA. It can therefore, be inferred that the number of visitors to NSW NPWS parks does in fact, mirror overnight visitation movements in NSW.*

*Tourism Research Australia.

So 2137 real people become 710,791 phantoms of the forest.

Chris Crump. N.S.W Shuts Millewa Forest.

theriverinastate.com.au/2018/10/01/chris-crump-n-s-w-shuts-timber-industry/

By David Landini

Uncategorized

October 1, 2018



Post Views: 410

To know the future, look at the past

I am Chris Crump and I have worked in the forest all my life. I am a third generation timber cutter. My family were among the first settlers in the Mathoura district — north of Echuca in the southern Riverina. They farmed 4,000 acres in the middle of what is red gum forest today. I am here to represent my ancestors, past foresters and past timber cutters who are not here to now defend and show the true history of the Murray red gum forests.

It seems to me that politicians and government bodies have taken it into their hands to rewrite and lie about our history to justify closing us down and destroying our towns and our lives.

I am not a public speaker, so I may stumble a bit but please bear with me. I once heard an old saying: “To know the future, look at the past.”

This is our story.



For well over 100 years we had a viable timber industry but now out of 40 sleeper cutters, 20 firewood cutters and five sawmills, our mill and one at Koondrook are all that is left of an industry that less than ten years ago was worth \$86 million a year to the regional economy.

Early in the 21st century green lobby groups began pestering the government to create a red gum national park. In 2003 the then president of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Peter Garret, announced his vision for a huge, cross-border park stretching from Strathmerton in the east downstream to Echuca. In April 2005 the Victorian Environment Assessment Council began an inquiry into the Victorian red gum forests, a study which resulted in most Victorian red gum forests being put into national parks. The Victorian red gum timber industry was shut down with the exception of one mill, Arburthnot's at Koondrook, which then had to rely heavily on trees sourced from New South Wales forests.

The green organisations began a campaign to have the New South Wales forests locked up too.

We were visited by a bunch of un-elected protesters who ignored "stop" and "no entry" signs, definitely did not sign the site induction book, went through the gates we had up and proceeded to tie our equipment up. They anchored cables to our machinery extending 30 feet up to a platform on which a man was standing. A sign on the cable said "lifeline" and it was arranged so that if we moved our machine the man would fall. There was a strong temptation to test the theory.

This was an OH&S issue so my wife rang Workcover. They would not act unless there was an accident. We called the police who wouldn't act unless notified by Forestry. Forestry couldn't act unless notified by Government. But **we** could be held accountable if they hurt themselves.

Ten days and \$100,000 of taxpayers' money later the police did remove them. They were charged with trespass but were acquitted on a technicality.

A marine biologist, Walter Stark, writing about a similar situation summed it up nicely:

“Environmentalism has redefined the fundamental concept of being a stakeholder. Despite having nothing invested and with no risk to themselves, environmental non-government organisations [NGOs] have managed to claim the status of stakeholders in remote matters and be accorded an equal voice to those whose entire lives, livelihoods and assets are being affected.”

The government responded by carrying out an Environmental Impact study which found that the forest and its various inhabitants were in no danger.

But in 2010 politics entered our towns and our lives. The government in Sydney, gave in to continuing Green pressure and sent the Natural Resources Commission to inspect and report on our industry.

OPEN and **TRANSPARENT** were the words they used when we first met them on the banks of the Murray near Mathoura.

Well to me “open and transparent” meant truthful and honest so, believing them, I raised these people up onto a pedestal believing this would be the case. But sadly, over a period of time we were given a lesson in politics.

The NRC arrived while we were in the grip of a 15 year drought. It was severe though no worse than other droughts the country had already faced. The NRC were clearly terrified of climate change. They included more frequent droughts in their computer modelling, giving them the answer government wanted to hear – the timber industry was unsustainable.

Nathan Rees, then Premier of New South Wales, on advice from the NRC, claimed that the trees were being threatened by what became known as the Millenium drought. It was the only reason he gave for his decision.

“Already under threat from attack from the drought and climate change, this habitat is fast approaching a tipping point where we risk losing it forever,” his press release said.

Dr John Williams, the NRC chair, claimed in the Final Assessment Report that: “Without flooding the red gum forests can’t regenerate and support the ecology and forestry industries which depend on them. The impacts on communities, land use and the natural environment are predicted to get more severe under climate change.”

A member of their advisory panel was so sure of this threat that he bet one sawmill owner the forest would never flood again. Just a year later he was forced to cough up for a carton of Crown Lager.

And who can remember this, and I quote from Tim Flannery back in 2007: “Even the rain that falls isn’t actually going to fill our dams and river systems.”

Well the rain did come. The rivers did flood. And the dams did fill in spectacular fashion.

Since 2010 the Murray forests have flooded five times — 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and the biggest of all 2016. Five big floods in seven years. 2010 and 2011 are officially the wettest two consecutive years on record for south-eastern Australia. A check of the Bureau of Meteorology and old newspapers shows that big droughts have always been followed by major floods and it's hard to find any proof that we are facing any unusual change in weather patterns.

The NRC began its inquiry by assuming that the forests were ancient. Dr Williams, the environment minister Frank Sartor and others made reference to 300 year old gums.

FRANK SARTOR: "These forests have been here for generations with many trees over 300 years old."

KRISTINA KENEALLY: "River Red Gums can grow to over 1,000 years and these trees have been alive since before European settlement. I am advised that some of them are 300 years old."

BOB CARR: "Look around and be filled with wonder of being in ancient Australia."

The trouble with all of this is that no one took the time to check our history. A map, believed to have been drawn by the surveyor Thomas Townsend in 1848, shows plenty of trees on ground never flooded by the Murray but very few on the floodplain where they are supposed to exist. The trees on the high ground are mostly box. The land where the red gums were supposed to be is mostly plains, reedbeds and sandhills. This is why my people and others took it up as settlement leases.

Townsend's map was drawn just six years after white settlement.

The explorer Charles Sturt in 1838 saw much the same, writing that: "Many fine stations might indeed be formed even to the junction of the Delangen."

His Delangen is today's Edward river, right in the heart of the modern Barmah-Millewa forest. The squatter Edward Curr certainly saw some red gums but he did not call them a forest. He wrote in his book *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria* about big grassy plains and extensive reedbeds along the Murray but not forests.

The first forester in charge of these forests, John Manton, said there were only ten mature red gums to the acre in 1895. But there were millions of young trees, most of them germinated by the great flood of 1870. Which leads to the question; if big floods germinate masses of red gums (and many of us have seen that happen) why did early explorers not see them? Well, Sturt, Curr, Townsend and others saw only about ten trees to the acre. Sturt and Curr also saw evidence of Aboriginal burning in the area. Curr was the first person to write about firestick farming.

These issues were raised with the NRC but were ignored.

The NRC also got its sums wrong when it used a spreadsheet to predict future quantities of quota sawlogs – by a large percentage. They eventually admitted this and revised their figures. But not until the Government had announced the national park. Needless to say there was no press release.

When wrong forecasts, resulting in multi-million dollar losses are made in private industry, heads usually roll. Protocols are put in place to ensure bad decisions are not repeated. Not so in Government organisations it seems.

Like many other towns in other parts of the nation, those in our region have been crippled by having our working forests converted to a national park.

When Bob Carr announced his first national park he told the people of Coolah in the central west of the state that 30,000 tourists would replace their sawmill. Never happened.

Years later he told the people of Balranald they could expect 50,000 tourists a year visiting Yanga National Park. But Bob's bush-walking, tree-hugging mates let him down again. And it's the town, not Carr, that's paying the price.

At the NRC community forum held in Mathoura Dr John Williams belittled our timber industry, saying it only contributed one per cent of the region's economy.

Ask any football coach and he will tell you it's the one percenters that count. They win games and eventually win premierships.

Apart from Dr Williams and his crew grossly underestimating the real income and the timber volume, he ignored that timber is a primary industry.

Primary industries supply raw materials to secondary industries, sometimes in distant regions, so it contributes to wealth creation in other places too.

Every sawmill has a string of other businesses which depend on it. Closing a mill can set off a chain reaction and you soon learn that there is a lot more than one percent involved.

We are now seeing that in towns like Mathoura, Deniliquin and Barham.

Not long after the national park opened we in Mathoura lost our only supermarket, a cafe/bakery, a Bed and Breakfast, and a pub.

The supermarket re-opened then closed again. The cafe re-opened twice and late last month closed again. The pub re-opened but has changed hands three times in about six years. Now a brave young couple have opened a general store and are trying to hang on.

My point is that you can't take a core industry away from a town and expect it to survive. It just doesn't happen.

We are also struggling to keep our football team (which, incidentally, is named the Timbercutters) — so hanging on to our identity is a battle.

The Mathoura Visitor Centre has recorded a drop from 31,000 to 22,000 visits a year. The Newsagency/Hardware store has lost 30 per cent of business since we were told the tourists would bring prosperity with them.

Spare a thought too for the Aboriginal timber cutters. Cummeragunja is an Aboriginal settlement on the New South Wales side of the Murray near Barmah.

Until the closing of the forest a group of young men from the settlement were running a viable firewood business using forest residue from thinning and harvesting operations. They often worked beside us in the Millewa forest.

Every now and then I run into Kenny Atkinson who managed the business.

“Crumpy, we've got to get our bush back,” he tells me. His boys are out of work and they need their dignity back.

It doesn't matter whether you're black, brindle or white, the national park decision has affected us all.

The big question though is, why do we need a national park?

These are not ancient forests. They are not old growth. They were not here when the first white men saw the area. They were not here when my family settled at Mathoura 150 years ago. Most of the trees grew after the record flood of 1870 and were managed by foresters until they were big enough to harvest.



They have survived previous droughts just as bad as the recent one — perhaps worse — which caused all the panic. Now that they have had a good drink the trees have recovered again. It does not take a National Park sign to make them grow. It just takes good management.

The decision to create the national park had nothing to do with the environment and everything to do with politicians protecting their jobs.

Nathan Rees declared the National Park the day before he lost his job as state premier.

The Greens' Ian Cohen told *The Australian* newspaper that Labor would come begging for Green preferences.

“If they don't deliver on these forests in a sustainable way, they can go to hell,” he said.



What social, economic and ecological balance can be achieved by a bunch of self-serving politicians protecting their backsides? But that's what we got. Propping up marginal city seats and losing our core industry.

There is a lot of documented history and heritage in those forests so I would like to share with you one of my favourite stories which shows how crucially important this industry was and highlights where we are heading now. There was an old timer in the Barmah forest, now a Victorian national park just across the Murray. He went off to enlist for World War 2. He passed the medical but was sent home.

“No, you're a sleeper cutter. We can train 'em to fight but we can't train 'em to cut sleepers,” he was told. Sleepers were vital for maintaining safe railways which carried troops and equipment in wartime.

The only reason given by the previous Government for creating the national park was that the trees were drought stressed. They had nothing else because the forests had been well cared for. Nature took care of the drought and now that they've had a good drink the trees are back to doing what trees do — growing again.

So they will need thinning but it needs to be thinning of the right kind.

We now have a thinning trial been carried out by National Parks – even though we have been thinning these forests and documenting the results for 130 years.

Sorry “Ecological” thinning trial – I missed that word that's the new word that apparently helps our forests grow thicker and better producing more habitat.

If only our 1st forester John Manton, the man who introduced the practice of thinning these forests had thought of it we might not be in the predicament we are in today – but I doubt it very much.

The budget for trial thinning 400 hectares is 1.5 million dollars – paid for by tax payers. They have also been allocated 400 thousand dollars a year over the next 5 years to monitor the results of this trial.

Not far away in Koondrook Perricoota state forest – 400 hectares of the same river red gums are thinned each year. The return to the state through royalties over the last 4 years is around 2.5 million dollars annually.

The national parks trial has been a disaster – maybe deliberately done to end up with a bad result.

This is what John Manton had to say about the benefits of thinning on his report to government more than 120 years ago.

I may state that red gum possesses a remarkable aptitude for reproduction and I have no hesitation in stating that where there was one young tree in 1875, when I took charge of these forest reserves, there are now twenty and all that is required to make these reserves practically inexhaustible is the inexpensive work of thinning.

So before governments send people down to destroy more of our towns, our lives and livelihoods for a few inner city green votes, please urge them to take the time to check your history and heritage so they can earn that word “honourable” in their title.

Finally I would like to share with you the ultimate insult to a town which helped grow its own forest and created its own warmth. It is also an example of bureaucracy gone mad.

Recently people who bought permits to collect firewood from the National Park from 2010 to 2013 were told by the National Parks and Wildlife Service that they were eligible for the 1.25 million dollar “Stay Warm, Stay Comfortable” program. This is supposed to help around 2,000 households in regional New South Wales to transition from firewood for home heating to what the Government sees as healthier and more sustainable energy. I ask you to consider what difference the hand-out (distributed by taxpayer-funded bureaucrats) would make to their winter comfort. It included:

- 4 compact fluorescent light globes,
- 2 fabric-covered door snakes (draught excluders),
- 2 window door seals,
- 1 thermometer,
- 1 shower timer,
- 2 hot water bottles,
- 1 timer isolation switch,

PLUS the Big Prize – a pamphlet lecturing them on the health risks of wood smoke. And there is a hint that you might qualify for assistance to insulate part of your home.

Isn't that what the “pink batts” scheme was supposed to fix?

Beware of Governments trying to be seen doing something when in reality nothing will replace what we previously had.

