

Dear Mr. Garnaut,

Re. Proposed Emissions Trading Scheme: Forestry and Agriculture

I have watched the continual destruction of our natural landscape all my life. I have seen our rivers and streams dry up and experienced bush fires. I have seen the effects of our current forest logging, agricultural and irrigation practices, firsthand. My interest in history showed me the fate of civilizations destroying their forests and soils.

So with great conviction I wish to convey to you that to leave agriculture, plantations and forests out of an emissions trading scheme aimed at preventing further global heating would be to disregard the evolution of carbon based life and subsequent development of earth's atmosphere and therefore the power of nature to correct atmospheric imbalances.

Our land is drying out and heating up from destruction of forests, other native vegetation and lack of organic matter in our soils. Excluding native forests, timber plantations and agriculture from Australia's ETS will mean we cannot easily meet the 25-40% emissions target for developed countries that is so desirable nor set in motion regenerative practices.

It's time to stop treating our forests, water and soils as a free resource. Climate change and emissions trading gives us an opportunity to place an economic value on them.

Note: The quoted LULUCF emissions figure provided by the AGO, 2007 appears to be based on land-use change and plantation emissions and will be superseded by the new research which will comply with UNFCCC accounting and will show the extent of emissions caused by current native forestry harvesting practices. Separating Forests and plantations, the farming of timber, is of utmost importance. The absorption of radiant heat by forests is another consideration. Vested interests in forestry and agriculture should not be!

My father's father was Superintendent of Stores for the Victorian Board of Works; he took me to the catchments and dams around Melbourne. My mother's parents were successful farmers in Gippsland, selling one farm on the Latrobe River to APM. He, like others, pulled out trees and let his cattle graze the riverbanks. I heard the stories of my grand mother visiting poor farmers who had been given land in the Strezleckies, provided they cleared it. The rains washed away their topsoil. Now we grandchildren plant trees.

So when the scientists in the seventies and eighties started to raise global heating as a possibility, I understood their concerns. During the eighties I meet naturalists who were coming around to the idea that until we could put a price on forests as water catchments or by other means, our forests would be logged unmercifully. We knew the extent of the logging of magnificent climax wet temperate forests in eastern Victoria, which are not fire prone. We were aware of the roting of the log grading systems; top grade logs were sold for chips.

We knew communities had to pay millions to chlorinate their dwindling water supplies once catchments were logged.

We also saw that the world could work together to stop ozone depletion; there was hope. And organic farming methods based on soils with high organic matter provided my family with healthy, delicious food, as good as I remembered from my grand mother's table.

The National Forest Policy and Regional Forest Agreements have proved a disaster for carbon capture, biodiversity conservation, and water quantity and quality.

With methods of extraction, including clearfelling and so called regenerative burning a new era started in our forests. This was cemented in 1990's by the RFA's, especially in the southeast around Eden's chip mill where logging practises continue to favour fast growing, more fire prone regrowth for woodchipping. Elsewhere, in WA and Q., where there is no native forest chip mill, plantations have taken the pressure off native forests.

Water deficits during regrowth are at least 15%, more for wet temperate forests; it takes around two hundred years before catchment levels are restored. How irresponsible to log catchments when the current Government is planning a desalination plant run by Yallourn brown coal! In 1982, Melbourne Water's extensive research was used to prove for every one dollar of timber royalties, logging the Upper Yarra lost one hundred dollars of water. They show regrowth in the Thompson's catchment decreases Melbourne's supply by 12% [1992 figures.]

The situation now, according to the figures supplied in the document by AGO, show -0.6 emissions from land use change, plantations and forests. This is completely at odds with new research. Our forestry emissions may well be close to the world's average of 20%.

The full-carbon UNFCCC accounts will almost certainly be the basis for future international commitments. The supplied figures are based on land use changes and do not include emissions when timber is harvested. The ongoing carbon sequestering of old growth forests is ignored. We now have the beginnings of research at ANU to supply emissions by forest type rather than land use change and plantations, the European based Kyoto model. Unfortunately the AGO, as of late last year, had only two people working on forests.

Plantations should be included with agriculture and native forests a separate sector.

Should Australia's unique, carbon dense forests continue to be a free resource? We place no resource tax on our forests, unlike gas and oil, etc.

Our ancient continent with her worn down soils has the world's richest bio-diversity and her magnificent, south east forests are carbon rich. For centuries we have been treating forests as a free resource. We cannot imagine what scientific finds are hidden in this rich and unique biosphere. We do know some of the species we have lost but have barely

started to research the biological activity of her soils. Our wet temperate forests, apart from their water catchment value, grow some of the world's finest furniture and flooring timbers.

The picture for our south east forests is grim; around 80-90% end up as wood chips; the States are losing money logging this free resource and they are not including externalities such as roads, water turbidity and water loss nor fire fighting expenditures as regrowth is more fire prone than old growth. In reality the States are changing their native forests to defacto plantations; the faster growing species are easier to chip. Yet the high Australian dollar means State Forest native timbers must be subsidised to undercut our plantation timber. Without this subsidised competition, the ATO would not need the existing taxation schemes for plantations.

Forests and peat bogs are now recognised as providing the greatest land based carbon sinks; Australia has perhaps only 5% conservation forest cover.

Destroying forests is causing at least twenty per cent of the world's pollution, more when the Australian forests are correctly calculated under the new rules. Once the world's vegetive cover was sixty percent now it is only forty percent and falling. Japan, the world's largest paper maker now has seventy percent forest cover, saved by an enlightened emperor. Some scientists believe the world needs sixty percent cover to maintain atmospheric balance.

Australia's vegetation cover: the majority of our land is to a greater or lessor extent, contributing to carbon emissions. When we study a map of Victoria or NSW there is little under conservation. Without a resource tax or a carbon tax, water pricing and biodiversity credits to place an economic cost, we are powerless to stop any unsustainable land-use activities that man can devise.

Tasmania complains that it has forty percent of their forests under conservation. The rest is open slather. In only a hundred plus years we have subdued one of the last great wildernesses in the world. The Premier states that 28% of Tasmania's income is derived from forestry. What is not stated is what opportunities are lost. Stopping the damming of the Franklin proved to be economically beneficial- the Australian Treasury got it right. Currently Tasmania has had to purchase brown coal power from Victoria as their hydro schemes dry up- could it be that logging in water catchments is seriously affecting their water flows

Forests need a resource tax or a price on 'green' carbon sequestration, water trading and biodiversity conservation credits.

Exporting our native forests as cheap, subsidised chips amounts to economic and conservation negligence by State Forest Bureaucracies. We have plenty of plantation timber to fulfil our needs.

Conservation: new research and UNFCC calculations on 'green carbon' emissions gives forests economic value and enables them to stay in the

ground. Protecting existing dense stocks of carbon is a more efficient water and land use than recapturing other 'green' carbon.

Agricultural and timber plantation emissions can be cut and monitored. Pricing should reflect water use, emissions from chemicals, etc and the effects of herbicides on native animals, insects, birds and soil biota. Agricultural soils that once held 5 percent organic matter now hold an average of 1% and less in monocultural systems! Australia has undertaken little research into organic farming methods though practices such as no-till have been adopted. Canadian research shows organically farmed soils are drought proofed with crops recovering quickly.

Emissions from land clearing should be reduced from the current 7% and farms should follow the advice from CSIRO to improve their permanent vegetation cover dramatically, fence off their waterways, and sequester carbon through increased organic matter (OM) in soils. Certified Organic and Biological farmers should be rewarded for their water saving and soil carbon sequestration. Agriculture has the advantage of Landcare groups who can disseminate and collect data. Satellites can monitor every square metre of Australia, note changes and check against other reporting mechanisms.

If the proposed ETS, based on the current accounting for LULUCF from the AGO excluded forests, and relied on Stationary Energy and Transport and even Agriculture, we will not be able to affect sufficient changes to our emissions nor address our water deficits.

If we were immediately to stop woodchipping our forests [80-90%] and move to plantation timber, we can cut CO2 emissions by at least 8-9% NOW (new research suggests double that figure.)

Climate change as I see it; as an artist and designer I am trained to understand the nature of beauty, harmony, order, of how the parts fit together to make the whole picture which is the evolutionary potential of life. We owe a responsibility to life on this planet. Therefore we must have a broad emissions trading scheme (and research) to include forests, plantations and agriculture thus giving the impetus to improve our farming practises using our soils to sequester carbon and to increase permanent vegetation cover. We owe it to the world to set an example and protect our forests, as water catchments, as unique biodiversity conservation and as some of the world's last great wilderness areas.

We need a comprehensive climate change strategy, not a limited emissions trading scheme.

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