

In the last 10 years we have seen the Timber Industry absolutely decimated in our area. Now only one saw mill, relying on Logs supplied by the Government remains and that is being forced to close as well. Our bush, our Wombat Forest was ravaged not by the "sawmills or the bush workers", but by a string of "Incompetent Government Bureaucrats", working for both sides of Government.

With massive amounts of woodchips being exported to Japan for 11 cents a tonne. and unsustainable quantities of saw logs harvested, by the direction of ignorant and / or incompetent Government Officials. A very "Sustainable Forest and Forest Industry" was bought to its knees in a few short years.

The reasons for the Government mistakes were never made public, no apology was ever made and The Wombat Forest has been locked up ever since. The token gesture of a public management group, set up to try and overcome some of the problems was just a joke. Again people in high places paid large sums of money achieved "Absolutely Nothing"

## TOURISM THE GREAT HOPE? OR IS IT

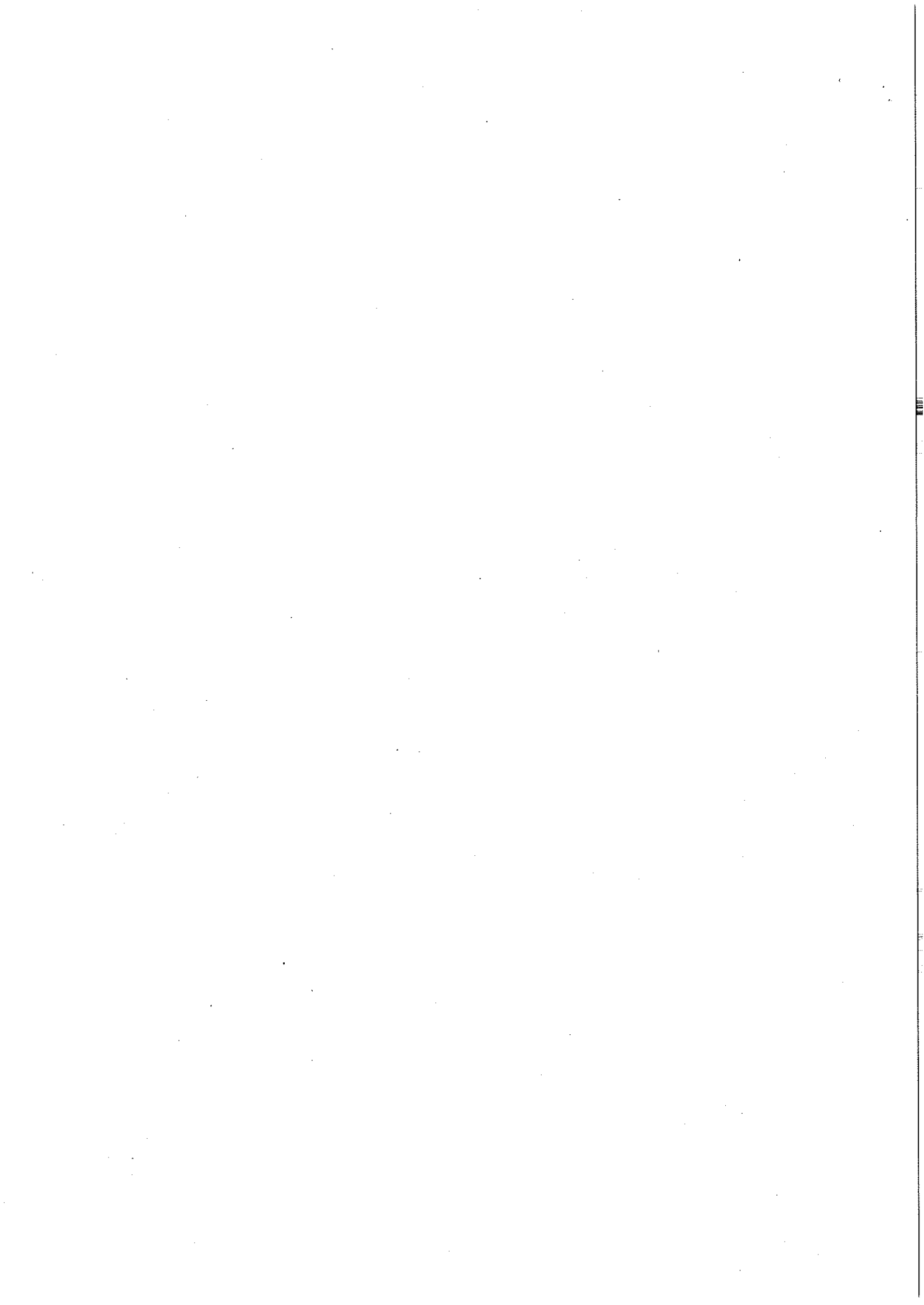
So our Timber Industry has closed down, Our Farms are becoming less viable and our once thriving Woolen Mills has closed. But don't despair all is not lost. Those diverse and plentiful jobs are going to be replaced with "Jobs in the Tourism Industry!" Sounds great, but lets look at the facts. Since the advent of that "Cool" name Tourism for the Daylesford and surrounding areas. And, Daylesford being "That Place to Live" we have seen. House and Land prices skyrocket. Petrol prices soar and the price of food and necessities becoming unbearable. Rates are going up at an alarming rate, driving less fortunate locals from their towns of birth to live in caravan parks or squats. Those that battle on are getting fewer services for their Rate Dollar. The likelihood of a "Daylesford born and raised young person" affording a house in the area is dwindling. Let alone being able to find a job and afford to live in the town. Most jobs especially in the Tourism area are "Casual". Talk to your bank manager about getting a loan on a Casual Wage.

With Tourism came the sub division and building on land which is incapable of sustaining or accommodating this amount of development. Our resources, especially potable water supplies are now being stretched to the limits, our waste water pollutes our rivers and streams and yet we have a Government in power pushing for further decentralization and pushing the barrow that thousands more people should be living in rural areas.

I acknowledge that Tourism has a place in the Daylesford area, but let's not put all our eggs in one basket. Daylesford needs the return of a range of diverse and plentiful jobs. Timber, Industry, Agriculture and Tourism all working together. We then have the infrastructure and resources to protect our Environment and BioDiversity.

## AGRIGULTURE

Then we turn to The Agricultural Industry. Local farmers always had a good rapport with what has been the Forest Commission, Department of Conservation Forests and Lands and of course now Department of Sustainability and Environment. As the owner of a farm adjoining Crown Land on all sides, I am proud to say I have worked well with these Government Agencies in the past.



3.

If we needed to erect a new fence adjoining Crown Land we could obtain a licence to fall trees encroaching on the fence lines. We were given licences to cut posts from the residue logs and the appropriate government agency helped us to make the task easier.

Now the terms and conditions have changed, we now have Regional Parks, patrolled by Parks Victoria Officers. Parks Victoria and their officers have made it quite clear that they do not want to continue this amicable arrangement between Landholder and Government.

Landholders are being refused permission to cut overhanging trees on fence lines. It is hard to obtain permits to cut posts, even from the residue of fallen trees on fence lines and in many cases landholders are being made to pay for firewood licences for the residue they remove when they don't even want the wood.

To add insult to injury, the constraints put on Landholders to eradicate problem animals (In our case Eastern Grey Kangaroos) is unmanageable. Our fence lines are being broken down not only by "The Government's Overhanging Trees" but also by the "Government's Wildlife". We are being issued permits for fewer and fewer Kangaroos when the population of kangaroos is soaring. We are prohibited from doing anything feasible with the roo carcasses, ie the meat, and the protocol to obtain skins for tanning is ridiculous. The end result is we have to dispose of these animals completely at our own cost, with the absolute waste of the carcass.

Farmers are being bombarded with rules and regulations regarding catchments, dams and bores. We are told it is our responsibility to clean up roadsides adjacent to our properties even though we don't own them. And, when we do clean them up we are being criticized for disturbing plants of significance.

## MY SUBMISSION

I am aware that your guidelines were set so as not to include Forestry in this white paper.

Whether this was done out of embarrassment for the way things were done in the past or whether it is just "hiding your head in the sand syndrome" It is in itself a ridiculous situation, as the proper care and management of our forests "Including Timber Harvesting" is paramount to biodiversity and a sustainable future.

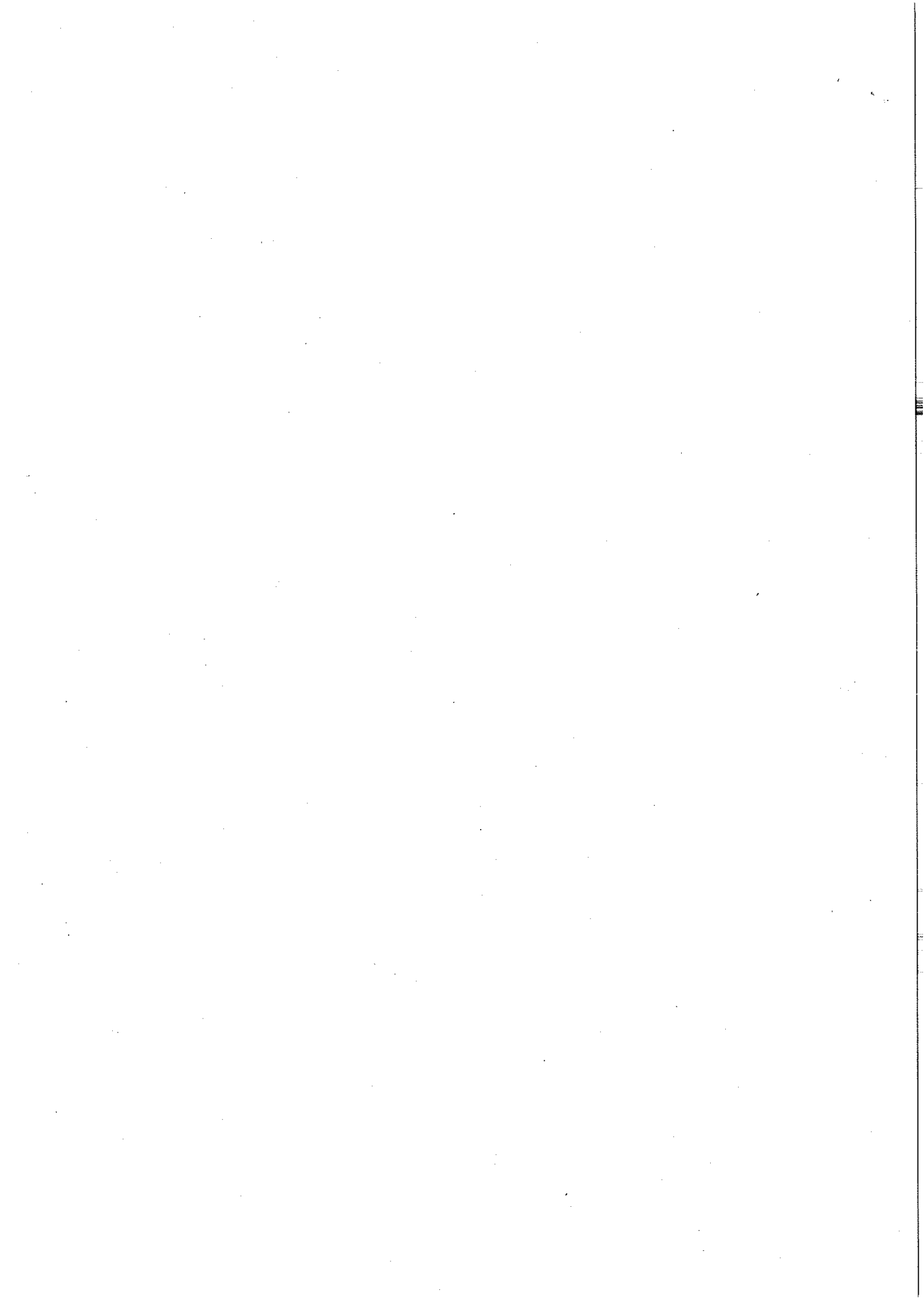
The matters I have outlined are only a small number of instances where the government has run "rough shot" over existing Local Communities in relation to matters which go to the very core of sustainable rural living.

Please start listening to locals who have expertise in these areas and have been a part of Rural Living since time in memorial. So many of the experts called on to advise government, are either out of touch with reality, or are hell bent on making a name for themselves.

The current drought has given many dramatists the ammunition to preach "doom and gloom" and call for drastic approaches to counteract supposed "Global Warming" This has played straight into the hands of Politicians wishing to get some mileage from the hype and spin.

Sadly your proposed "De Salination Plant for Wonthaggi is just one example. Your "Super Pipeline" from North to South is another. Again running "rough shot" over farmers land in a "compulsory acquisition land grab" (Robbing Peter to Pay Paul) Give every household in Victoria a "free" water tank and you are half way to solving some of our problems. With, may I suggest, little or no impact on the environment.

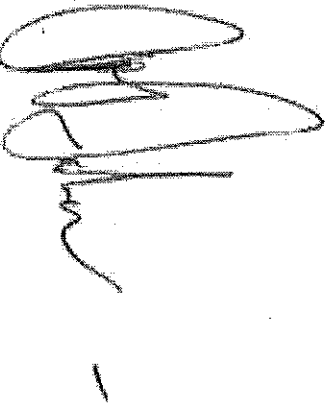
Of course it would be hard to raise revenue from water held in private water tanks.



4.

Stop selling off our public assets. Our power, our water our public institutions are being sold off at an alarming rate. To Foreign Companies who don't care for our environment and are hell bent on making a "Fast Buck" to send back to "Their Country" We now pay Foreign Companies for our Electricity, our Gas, and our Water, just to name a few. Companies that you the Government and we the people have little say over regarding the "Fees" they charge us or the "Pollution" they create.

I respectfully request that the Victorian Government and its Agencies listen to and take into account the issues raised by local people with a wealth of knowledge on our local environment. Thus ensuring the protection our land, our environment, our biodiversity, and our sustainability for the future.



Ross Baker

