

# **RECONCILIATION IN THE FOREST?**

**An Exploration of the Conflict Over the Logging of  
Native Forests in the South-west of Western Australia**



This thesis is presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

**David Worth, AssDip Aero Eng (RMIT), MBA (UTS)**

**Murdoch University, WA Australia**

**2004**

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my own, original research, that due acknowledgment of other sources has been made where used, and that it contains as its main content, work which has not been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

**Signed:**

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**David John Worth**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to ensure that I acknowledge as many people as possible who have helped me over the past six years of my part-time study. I apologise to those I may inadvertently overlook. Firstly, I would like to thank all those who participate in social movements throughout Australia, as through their passion and commitment we get to know more about ourselves as Australians and gain a better understanding of our planet and the communities that inhabit it. In particular, I would like to sincerely thank the people from the pro- and anti-logging movements in Western Australia. Without their willingness to participate and assist my research I would have no dissertation. For many of them it was an important decision because I imposed on them at a time when their organisations were very active in the lead-up to the State election in early 2001.

I also need to gratefully acknowledge the two women in my research life. My wife, Fran, supported me over the whole journey by reading my drafts, correcting my grammar and suggesting changes. In the same vein, I need to thank my son, Daniel, for his patience. I now hope to reward him by locking away the computer and spending more time on his activities. Secondly, my supervisor, Emeritus Professor Cora Baldock, has made a large contribution to the final shape of my thesis. She became engaged with my project from our first discussions. Cora made valuable suggestions at critical times and provided consistent support along the way, with the odd ‘kick in the pants’ when I needed it.

My other ‘family’ has been the academics at Murdoch University and the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), who offered me their support as well as part-time teaching over the past six years. Their friendship has allowed me to keep in touch with the academic community and developments in the disciplines

associated with my study. They and the other postgraduate students provided valuable sounding boards for my ideas. In particular, I would like to thank Associate Professor Mick Campion, Professor Trish Harris and Dr Dave Palmer for their support over my past four years at Murdoch University. Additionally, I would like to thank Jill Soderstrom and Georgina Wright for their professional administrative assistance and Leonie Stella for her accurate transcription of my interviews.

At the heart of any thesis is the knowledge that precedes the research. I would like to give a big ‘thanks’ to the Librarians at Murdoch University, University of WA, UTS, Sydney University (Fisher Library) as well as those at the State Library (Battye Collection) and the Department of Conservation and Land Management. In particular I would like to thank Niamh Corbert, Librarian at the Parliamentary Library and Information Services, Parliament of Western Australia and Helen Pecheniuk Oral History Reference Librarian at the National Library of Australia. Often I was unsure of what I was looking for and I appreciated the professionalism, knowledge and patience of the library staff I dealt with.

Finally, I would like to thank three people who encouraged my early steps in undertaking a research degree. Professor Mark Lyons, Associate Professor Jenny Onyx, and Dr Thekla Rura-Polley at UTS were important influences for me in the early stages and I appreciated their faith that an engineer with a business degree could make a contribution to the study of Australian social movements.

## **ABSTRACT**

Over the past 30 years in Western Australia (WA), there has been a heated debate about the future use of the remaining temperate old-growth forests of karri and jarrah in the south-west of the State. This debate revolved around policy proposals from two social movements: one social movement wanted to preserve as much of the remaining old-growth forests as possible, and an opposing social movement supported a continued 'sustainable' logging of the forests for hardwood products. This research project undertook a comparative case study analysis of one WA organisation from each of these two social movements- Timber Communities Australia (TCA) on the pro-logging side and Liberals For Forests (LFF) on the anti-logging side. It drew on a macro-level European theoretical approach (New Social Movement theory) and a US organisational approach (Resource Mobilisation Theory). The study also investigated the extent to which these two social movement organisations (SMOs) had been effective in influencing the development of State forest policy. For this purpose Schumaker's (1975) framework for judging the political effectiveness of social movements was used. The key research problem investigated in this thesis is why these two SMOs continued to debate the forest policy issue after more than 30 years of public controversy?

Interviews with a key range of stakeholders were the key research method of this study. Additionally, an investigation into important economic and social changes in the south west was undertaken using census and other data between 1971 and 2001 and this was supported by an historical analysis of the timber industry in WA's south west. Finally, a 3-year study of the reporting of forest issues by two local and one national newspaper was completed. The 1998-2000

period was chosen for the newspaper analysis as this was when the new Regional Forest Agreement was being finalised.

This research shows that new values toward the old-growth forests developed among the WA public over the past 30 years and this has created an unbridgeable policy gap between those such as the TCA who wanted the past policies to continue and those such as the LFF who wanted to preserve the remaining native forests. ABS data confirm that the south-west region of WA changed dramatically between 1970 and 2000 as the wine and tourism industries developed and that these changes were different to those occurring in the other wine regions and non-city areas of Australia. As the population increased in this region, a key segment attracted by these new employment opportunities were middle class, well-educated people with new values toward the natural environment.

The interview and newspaper article data clearly showed that the debate in WA in the late 1990s over the proposed RFA provided a new political opportunity for the anti-logging movement to raise their concerns and to establish a renewed public debate about the appropriateness of the WA forest policies. This came at a time when the traditional policy power of the timber industry stakeholders and the government department in charge of the forests (Conservation And Land Management) had been dramatically diminished. The combination of these factors led to the election of the new ALP government and the introduction of a new, non-logging policy for WA's old-growth native forests.

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## **ACRONYMS**

Australian States-

NSW- New South Wales

VIC- Victoria

QLD- Queensland

WA- Western Australia

SA- South Australia

TAS- Tasmania

ACT- Australian Capital Territory

NT- Northern Territory

AAP	Australian Associated Press
ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agricultural Research Economics
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFFA	Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry Australia Department
AFL-	Australian Football League
ALP	Australian Labor Party
CALM	Department of Conservation and Land Management
CCWA	Conservation Council of WA
COAG	Coalition of Australian Governments
CTRC	Conservation Through Reserves Committee
DLP-	Democratic Labor Party
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
FIFWA	Forest Industries Federation of WA
FPS	Forest Protection Society (now TCA)
MP	Member of Parliament
RAC	Resource Assessments Commission
RFA	Regional Forest Agreement
LFF	Liberals For Forests
NLA	National Library of Australia
SW	South-west
TCA	Timber Communities Australia
TLC	Trades and Labour Council (now Unions WA)
TWS	The Wilderness Society
WA	Western Australia
WAFA	West Australian Forests Alliance