



Photo: Richard Green

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Dr Fiona Kotvojs
Liberal for Eden Monaro
701 Reedy Swamp Road
DIGNAMS CREEK NSW 2550

Dear Fiona,

Thank you for your email outlining the investments which the Liberal Party is likely to make if successful in the Federal elections. The Government's anticipated surplus is creditable. That it could be in a position to create jobs, give tax relief to families and small businesses, invest in schools, hospitals and roads, and keep our borders secure is commendable.

It seems to me that the federal Government has most probably brought the country into a financially stable and lucrative position it has not enjoyed for a very long time.

Since moving to the far south coast it has been continually depressing to witness the way the forests, and all that they contain, are treated. One wonders which 'consciousness', 'right' or 'belief' underpins the philosophy which drives the logging of our public native forests. The decades have proven it to be unpopular amongst the people who you have invited to consider voting for you, yet the woodchip sector brings grief, historic financial loss and is digressive.

It is apparent to me, that 'climate change', 'environmental protection' and 'unique native species' barely gain a mention within the two major parties' election manifestos. I cannot help but wonder why these elements provide a sticking point in the thinking which blocks the practice of affording respect to our public's natural native (State) forests and valuing them as a priceless, sacred, irreplaceable inheritance rather than as something to destroy.

This part of Australia could be 'an even better place to live' if the elements the public embraces as precious were afforded the same consciousness and respect by an incoming federal government; a federal government which values those elements which native forest logging destroys. These losses include beauty, canopy protection, carbon sequestration, climate abatement, Indigenous culture, wildlife and habitat, heritage, oxygen, soil and water conservation and the wonder and joy we experience in a protected forest versus the shame and horror of seeing a trashed one.

In regional NSW, agriculture, forestry and fishery combined, comprise only 2.5% of the workforce, ranking 15th behind other industries.¹ The Department of Industry states that industries in Regional NSW have expanded from traditional agribusiness, manufacturing and mining origins to embrace a diverse range of climate responsive high-growth areas including, aquaculture, biotechnology, communications, renewable energy and viticulture.² This region is an excellent place in which to facilitate these industries without damaging its beauty. Yet, it seems as if the south east region of NSW is steadfastly putting the brakes on such progressive and high growth development by continuing to be 'connected to the hip' of the logging sector which archaically ranks alongside the salmon and whaling industries of yore.

A visionary government would be responding to the findings of respected Australian scientists. A visionary government would consider new jobs in forest protection and restoration and draw on Indigenous forest knowledge and practices. Many jobs could be created in ecotourism, cultural education, wildlife protection, fire preparedness, and pest and weed eradication, to conserve our public forests for all their natural benefits and to meet the needs of intergenerational equity and climate. Transitioning forest workers into plantations or providing fair retirement packages could meet the needs of the few workers remaining in the logging sector in this region.

The Government promotes its winning financial position. When a person gets a pay rise or has a lottery win, it is 'Australian' for that person to spend part of it on, say, taking the family out for dinner, having a holiday, buying a new car, or paying off a debt. It seems timely now for the Government to celebrate and share that win by giving part of it back to the environment by ending native forest logging.

If for no other reason, logging of our precious native forests should end simply because it is the right thing to do. Giving the public hope, ending the 'forest wars', creating progressive new industries and building on allied ones, may just be enough to secure the votes required to help you win this election.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Bronte Somerset

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¹ <https://profile.id.com.au/australia/industries?WebID=180>

² <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/live-and-work-in-nsw/working-in-nsw/industries>