



Corn Trail fail

Harry Laing is no stranger to forest action. Current logging right next to the Corn Trail has brought him and many others into the forest again. He explains why ...



Back in the late nineties, when the Regional Forests Agreements process was happening, locals and others fought to get Monga and Buckenbowra State Forests put into parks or reserves. They'd been over logged, too much timber had been taken out and they were too special to keep smashing up for very little return. As a result, in 2000, the bulk of Monga Forest was put into national park and that also included Buckenbowra over the escarpment and a bit of Quart Pot. It was 27,000 hectares and it was gazetted as national park. But State

Forests, as they were then, kept the meat in the middle of the sandwich. They kept a big L-shaped piece of State Forest in the middle of Monga National Park. There were three compartments in there and they kept them, I imagine, because they wanted a keeper — a footprint in the area. It wasn't because there was much timber.

Inevitably, they then decided to log one of those compartments and were about to start making roads into it, which led to the action where six people were fined by State Forests and three, including myself, were arrested. This was July 2001. (We went to court and were fined but no charges were recorded, which was considered a victory.)

State Forests did make the roads and they started logging. And we kept protesting. But, as we'd said all along, there wasn't much decent timber in there. Then there were the young forest warrior element, the ferals as we called them; they really annoyed the loggers a lot.

In the end the loggers just gave up even though they hadn't finished what they said they were going to do. They just got out. These compartments were then gazetted as national park in 2003.

The only trouble was, down at the bottom of the escarpment there were still missing pieces. One of them was at the bottom of the Corn Trail and that's

where they've now gone back in. Adjacent to the bottom quarter of the Corn Trail, just up from the Buckenbowra river, there's just a 50m buffer, and they're now logging the hell out of compartment 517.

When you're down there and you look up at the escarpment, Clyde Mountain, Murrenburg Mountain, with the river just down the way, you can't help but wonder what are they doing this for? The figures don't add up — they're making nothing.

We as taxpayers are paying them to log it — paying them to destroy it. Why? Who made that decision to log in there?

On the financial figures, our best estimate, and this is being generous, is they might make \$200,000 out of logging 290-odd hectares. That's so little money, it's unbelievable.

You know, Forestry Corp of NSW is a

FLOG A LOG

very odd entity. It's a corporation that is not bound by corporations law. It has two shareholders, the Finance Minister and the Treasurer— and it has a board. Essentially they're accountable to nobody. They're exempt from environmental protection laws, virtually entirely. Protest is completely banned and subject to draconian threats.

Here's the kicker. I read the other day, the softwood arm of Forestry Corp of New South Wales has been subsidising the hardwood arm, the native forest division, to the tune of \$79 million. They're cross-subsidising their own loss-making business. It must be for reasons of ideology — they think they'll keep cutting down native forest because they always have. Just because they're there — still in the forestry estate.

They admit that over 20% of this compartment is going for fire wood and 30% for pulp.

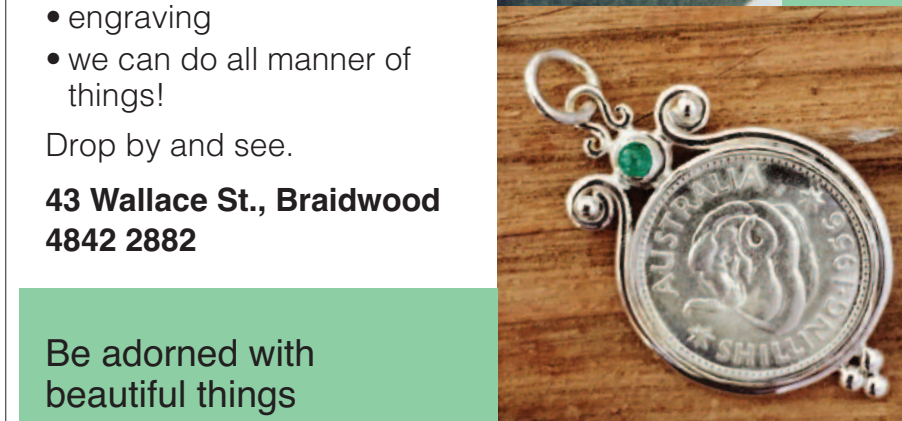
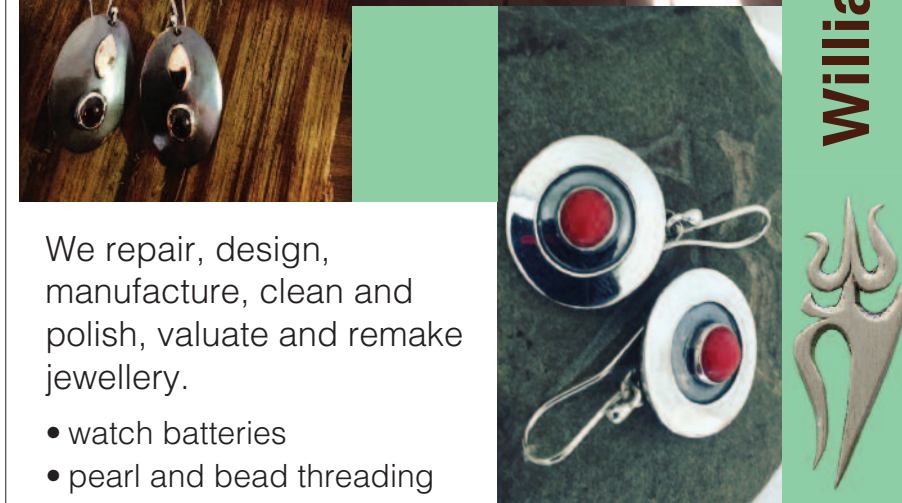
They are cutting down very large trees for firewood and pulp. Is that a high value industry?

We're calling for a moratorium on the logging. We want to see it transition into a forestry exclusion zone and then incorporate it in Monga National Park by which it's surrounded — it makes sense.

The Corn Trail is an iconic track. It's used by walkers and horse riders. It should be an integral part of the development of tourism for our region — things like guided walks and looking at our Indigenous history. That would make far more sense.

Then there's the fact that those trees, old growth forests and semi old growth, are very valuable as highly efficient carbon stores. Which has to be significant in this era of climate change.

You could do some simple sums and come to the conclusion that, even ignoring the value of tourism and public amenity, keeping the trees is worth considerably more than the \$200,000 you'll get from destroying them. ■



We repair, design, manufacture, clean and polish, valuate and remake jewellery.

- watch batteries
- pearl and bead threading
- engraving
- we can do all manner of things!

Drop by and see.

43 Wallace St., Braidwood
4842 2882

Be adorned with beautiful things

William Verdon Jeweller