

THE TASMANIAN PULP MILL—BELL BAY INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, TAMAR VALLEY

Raverty resignation

Dr Warwick Raverty was initially a panel member of the RPDC inquiry that developed and recommended *new environmental emission limit guidelines for any new bleached eucalypt kraft pulp mill in Tasmania*, released in August 2004¹.

Once the Government had accepted these guidelines for a mill to be built any where in Tasmania and Gunns announced its project to build a pulp mill in accordance with these guidelines, Dr Raverty was appointed to the RPDC panel tasked to undertake an integrated impact assessment of the Mill.

At the first direction hearing held by the RPDC in October 2006 the Greens challenged Dr Raverty's independence to sit on the assessment panel. At the hearing lawyers representing the Federal and State Greens foreshadowed an application that Dr Raverty disqualify himself and claimed:

the basis for that application will be apprehended bias. The basis of the claim of apprehended bias is effectively the apprehension that a member of the public would have that Dr Raverty has pre-judged what we say are certain critical issues in relation to this matter, including the applicability and appropriateness of using the TAPM guidelines in relation to the assessment of air quality issues, and also arising from his involvement with the CSIRO.²

In a written submission the greens followed up the hearing with the following claims:

"Dr Raverty might not bring an impartial and unprejudiced mind to...the conduct of the integrated assessment."

The basis of that assertion was that Dr Raverty has been a research Manager and Scientist in the Pulp and Paper Group of Ensis (formerly CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products) for the past 5 years. The greens claimed that Ensis had already formed a clear view in respect to the mill and referred to a number of Pulp Mill task force newsletters and an Ensis question and answer fact sheets.

The Greens claimed that Ensis view was that the emission guidelines were the most stringent in the world, that ECF and TCF were equivalent in impact on the environment, that organochlorines bio- degrade and do not accumulate, and that pulp mills essentially run on the solar energy stored in the timber.

The Greens also objected to the use of the Air Pollution Model (TAPM) that had been used by the developer to assess air pollution as it was developed by CSIRO (a partner in Ensis).³

On 5 January 2007, *the Examiner* reported the shock resignation of Dr Raverty after receiving advice from Solicitor-General about a perceived conflict of interest."⁴

Since his resignation Dr Raverty has become a vocal critic of the pulp mill (at Bell Bay) appearing at rallies, public meetings, on radio and television as well as on activist internet based sites opposing the mill. He has authored submissions to government and briefed political leaders.

¹ RPDC 2004 Development of new environmental emission limit guidelines for any new bleached eucalypt kraft pulp mill in Tasmania

² Auscript Australasia Pty Ltd, Transcript Of Proceedings RPDC Direction Hearing Pulp Mill Assessment 25 Oct 2006

³ Michael Brett, Letter to the RPDC The Pulp Mill, dated 31 October 2006.

⁴ Michael Stedman, 5 January 2007, *Shock resignation has pulp mill up in the air*, The Examiner, Launceston.

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In a report of an interview with Dr Raverty in March 2007, the Media reported that:

“in December he resigned from the RPDC assessment panel, complaining about political interference from the State Government.”

The report further stated that he opposed the mill because the Long Reach sites fails because of:

- Serious issues with the process Gunns plans to use to produce chlorine dioxide, which could breach international conventions for the production of toxic organochlorines.
- Concern about air pollution from the pulp mill and its impact on the health of people in Launceston and its surrounds.
- Odour from the mill, which may not be a significant problem in more remote areas with better air flow, but could be a major issue in the densely populated Tamar Valley, which traps air pollution for days.⁵

Yet these three concerns have all been fully considered by the State Government assessment process and the Federal approval. In fact the developer has changed the Chlorine dioxide process and Raverty himself has withdrawn⁶ “any suggestion that Gunns will be storing vast quantities of chlorine on site which, if gasified, would kill everything in a fifteen kilometer radius”.

The air pollution question was also dealt with by Dr Peter Manins, Senior Research Scientist, Marine and Atmospheric Research, CSIRO: who told Four Corners in relation to air pollution:

“I’ve seen a fair bit of press that’s frankly just scaremongering. The best modelling data that we’ve seen and can do is that there won’t be an issue in Launceston at all due to the pulp mill. Launceston’s got far more concern, should have far more concern over the local domestic wood heaters and motor cars and smoking. They are far more important issues for the public in Launceston than this pulp mill, 36 kilometres away.

The pulp mill might add or one or two micrograms per cubic metre, compared with wood smoke of 50 to 200 micrograms per cubic metre. What is one or two compared with 50 to 200?”⁷

Dr Raverty’s concerns on smell fail to acknowledge the increased design features designed to minimize the risk of odour and the Ensis research that claims:

Ensis is currently in development of odour management techniques, and have had much recent success in this field. The Environmental Protection Agency hopes to have eliminated plant odours in Australia within the next few years, and in light of recent developments, this goal is clearly in sight.⁸

[Raverty denies that this quote by his employer is applicable to this mill, yet Ensis has not removed the advice, although quoted numerous times in the media]

Attachment: Two key referenced web sites.

⁵ Simon Bevilacqua, 25 March, 2007 *Expert writes off Long Reach* The Sunday Tasmanian, Hobart

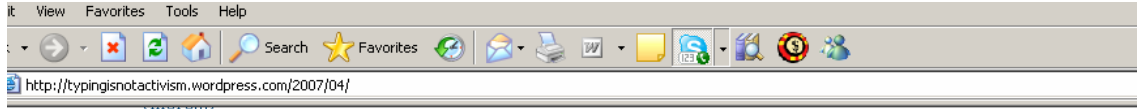
⁶ typingisnotactivism 21 April, 2007 An Interview with Dr Warwick Raverty - Tuesday April 17: SWECO PIC, Premier Paul Lennon, the Tasmanian Pulp Mill Task Force, defamation, a retraction and due process <http://typingisnotactivism.wordpress.com/2007/04/>

⁷ Four Corners 30 July 2007, "Grist to the Mill", The ABC

⁸ Ensis, Odour Management

<http://www.ensisjv.com/ResearchCapabilitiesAchievements/PulpandPaperProcessingandProducts/OdourManagement/tabid/263/Default.aspx> accessed 13 March 2007

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7 comments

An Interview with Dr Warwick Raverty - Tuesday April 17: SWECO PIC, Premier Paul Lennon, the Tasmanian Pulp Mill Task Force, defamation, a retraction and due process

Posted in [Australian politics](#), [Tasmania](#), [corporate intrigue](#), [current affairs](#), [environment](#), [human rights](#), [interview](#) by typingisnotactivism on April 21st, 2007

A verbatim transcript of the first 12 minutes of a two hour interview conducted with [Dr Warwick Raverty](#) follows this introduction. Significantly, we spoke on the very day that Steve Kons announced SWECO PIC as the independent consultant chosen to assess the pulp mill proposal for the Tamar Valley and accordingly advise the Tasmanian Government.

More of this far-reaching discussion will be brought to you in the coming week, but the intention of this interview was to prepare for an article due out shortly. Having spoken with Tasmanian Time's Lindsay Tuffin, to whom I'm sure many southerners are grateful for a kick-arse genuinely independent media source in Tassie (especially in times like these), here comes that part of the discussion which focused on the appointment of SWECO.

Pertinent to this interview, Dr Raverty is speaking on his own behalf, and his opinions and comments have nothing to do with his role in the CSIRO, or in the Joint venture Ensis, to which he is presently seconded. Notwithstanding this fact, in the course of our discussion he expressed sincere and strong appreciation for senior staff at the CSIRO who, while neither implicitly supporting nor condemning his views, have both supported and maintained his right to speak publicly on his own behalf despite pressures they themselves might be experiencing. Dr Raverty had 20 years experience in the kraft pulping and paper industry before joining CSIRO in 2000.

In further clarification on a genuinely unrelated matter, Dr Raverty would like to expressly withdraw any suggestion that Gunns will be storing vast quantities of chlorine on site which, if gasified, would kill everything in a fifteen kilometer radius. He has now been assured by Les Baker, representing Gunns, that all such potentially hazardous chemicals will be used in the mill as they are produced. Baker insists that they will not be stored in massive quantities on site as Raverty previously thought. Raverty maintains that this misunderstanding would not have occurred had all information about the operation of the mill been provided by Gunns in a clear and timely manner in the course of the now defunct RPDC panel's assessment of the proposal's detail.

