

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

### **JUST WHO IS BEHIND THE OPPOSITION TO TASMANIA’S VALUE ADDING PULP MILL?**

The Pulp mill will not have any impact on high quality wilderness or Tasmania’s wild old growth forests yet the Wilderness Society has contracted a high profile Public Relations corporation to undertake media management to undermine the economic credentials of the approved mill.

By exporting pulp rather than the bulkier and heavier wood chip, the pulp mill will result in saving of about one million tonnes of greenhouse gas each year, yet web based global warming activist group ‘Get Up!’ has engaged the same high profile PR spin doctors to conduct advertising and media campaigns against Tasmania’s pulp mill.

More ‘pressure’ was placed on the pulp mill with the release of a poll showing opposition to it in June 2008 by Get Up. The Poll was conducted by Essential Research. This is a division of the same PR and media management corporation engaged by both the Wilderness Society and Get Up!

Both Get Up and the Wilderness Society employed the PR corporation to assist them in briefing investors and financial analyst at Credit Suisse and then publicised ‘selected’ details of the briefing without the approval of Credit Suisse.

The PR corporation is EMC, Essential Marketing Communications. It is best known for its campaign in the lead up of the 2007 election including the ACTU’s Your Rights at Work and coining the term “working families” for focus of the ALP’s federal election policy.

But the EMC also seems to have strong links to the Greens. Its Canberra lobbyist in charge of Federal Political Relations, Ben Oquist, is a former media advisor to Greens leader, Bob Brown.

In NSW EMC’s communication manager, Paul Sheridan, was a media adviser to Greens MP Ian Cohen.

### **Does this green PR firm manipulate public opinion and make use of an unsuspecting media?**

They target journalists, ‘select’ media organisations, select key messages, even test those messages and then prepare carefully worded media releases for both paid and free placements. They even boast about these activities on their web site as these two following examples show.

The first is how the PR firm sought to undermine the work of Allen’s Consulting that showed a \$6.7 billion increase to the State economy from the pulp mill, the second to counter concern by timber communities that a Victorian forest lock up would and did cost jobs in rural communities.

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**FROM EMC WEBSITE** <http://www.essentialmedia.com.au/> accessed 10 July 2008

### **Mill's \$3 Billion Claim Pulped**

February 15, 2008

The key argument in favour of the controversial Tamar Valley pulp mill has been discredited in a report commissioned by The Wilderness Society (TWS).

Proponents of the mill, including the Tasmanian government, pointed to a \$3 billion economic benefit to the state.

However the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research found the \$3 billion estimate was seriously flawed and the development of the mill would likely leave the state worse off by \$300 million.

The findings made front page national news and drew reactions from state and federal politicians after TWS approached EMC to publicise the report.

"Their aim was to punch holes in the case that this huge pulp mill was going to produce a great economic benefit for Tasmania," said EMC Client Manager **Paul Sheridan**.

"The \$3 billion benefit was the key argument from the Tasmanian government as to why the pulp mill should go ahead. By getting the results of the report taken seriously at a state and federal level, TWS wanted to use the court of public opinion to undermine that."

Paul's first task was to decipher the key findings of the report and present them in media material that addressed all the core arguments in a clear and credible way.

Paul targeted **The Australian newspaper**, because of its credibility and national reach, where the story ran on the front page. It was also covered on **ABC's flagship radio current affairs program AM**.

"Placement was crucial for the political impact of this story. The mill still has hurdles to cross, and this story played a role in undermining the core argument for its going ahead."

### Case Study

#### **The Victorian Government's Environment Conservation Council**

##### **The Challenge**

When the Environment Conservation Council in Victoria wanted an information campaign to counter timber industry propaganda against its Box-Ironbark National Parks proposals so the laws could get through the Opposition controlled Upper House it asked EMC to investigate and report.

##### **Approach**

EMC ran four focus groups in towns next to the forests and tested arguments on both sides. Once people understood that 360 endangered species of plants and animals resided in the forests they fully supported the national parks proposals even though the Box-Ironbark forests didn't have the natural visual beauty of other forests.

EMC then took the ECC report and held embargoed media briefings for local editors and journalists so they had an hour to talk with Chairman of the ECC to get fully across the issues.

##### **Result**

The report launch was greeted with a full front page story in the Bendigo Advertiser proclaiming 'City Within a Park'. Local opposition was muted and the bill passed through the Upper House with Opposition support.

##### **What the Client Said**

"EMC's research, strategic communications advice and media relations support were first class and critical to the positive community response our Box-ironbark recommendations received." John Lovering, Environment Conservation Council former chair