



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**  
**PROOF**  
**ADJOURNMENT**  
**Lapoinya**  
**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 19 August 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Wednesday, 19 August 2015  <b>Page</b> 104  <b>Questioner</b>  <b>Speaker</b> Whish-Wilson, Sen Peter</p>	<p><b>Source</b> Senate  <b>Proof</b> Yes  <b>Responder</b>  <b>Question No.</b></p>
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**Senator WHISH-WILSON** (Tasmania) (19:36): Recently, when the late Malcolm Fraser passed away, it was fascinating for me, as a proud Green, to look at his environmental track record as a progressive—one could perhaps say one of the last true Liberals. He achieved some magnificent outcomes for the environment. One that was near and dear to my heart was the ban on commercial whaling. He had a leadership role in that. I was just having a look tonight at some other examples, and I thought it would be a really interesting way to frame a speech I would like to make about a very small, special place in Tasmania that is under threat. It is called Lapoinya. Before I go there, I want to talk about another Liberal Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton, who today would be classified as a green 'vigilante'. I have in my hands a copy of a press release from 1 July 1970: 'Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton'. It says:

The Commonwealth will meet the reasonable legal costs, including Counsels' fees, of five conservationist bodies appearing before the Royal Commission on Barrier Reef Petroleum Drilling.

Requests for financial assistance for full-time legal representation were received from the Australian Conservation Foundation and four Queensland scientific or conservationist organisations: The Great Barrier Reef Committee, the Queensland Littoral Society, the Save the Barrier Reef Committee and the Wild Life Preservation Society of Queensland.

Earlier, 35 members of the Queensland Bar had offered their services gratuitously to assist the conservationists in presenting their evidence. This would have resulted in each set of counsel appearing for one week at a time, a course which would have presented obvious difficulties.

Here we had a Liberal Prime Minister who financed a legal case by conservationists to stop Joh Bjelke-Petersen from petroleum drilling in the Great Barrier Reef. I certainly hope all of us here in the Senate in today's day and age would agree that that would have been a stupid thing to do and a total disaster. But it gives you an idea perhaps of how much things change—but then again how much they stay the same, with the fact that these areas are still under threat.

But I would like to talk, as I mentioned a second ago, about a little place in Tasmania that is under threat. This place, Lapoinya, is a 49-hectare coupe, so not a big coupe by any means. The official coupe is FD053A. It is a polygon coupe. It is an area of forest left over from the Flowerdale reserve, which is a much larger—260 hectares—area of conservation forest that has been separated by a road. People have brought up families and lived their lives in this area of the north-west of Tasmania, and now they are facing the real threat of this coupe being logged. So I rise tonight to speak about this little pocket of tranquillity in north-west Tasmania known as Lapoinya, and I would like to highlight the failure of the EPBC Act to protect this classic Tasmanian gem.

It is a tiny settlement tucked away in deep valleys adjacent to the Flowerdale River catchment. It is not a big place. Some would say it is not a grand place, but it is a special place, especially to the locals who live in the Wynyard area. This is shaping up to be a symbolic fight, not just for the community in Lapoinya, who want to protect the area that they have grown up in and all their memories, all the special times they have had in the area and the immense value that they get and have got out of this forest for generations; it is also symbolic for the whole state. Forestry Tasmania has been pretty much bankrupt, in the figurative sense, and has not been logging on a large scale for many months. But it is about to start up again soon, and coupes such as Lapoinya are clearly under threat in the logging madness that we expect to see commence again in October. It is an unthinkable and unprofitable approach, not just for Tasmania's natural heritage but also for the economy. Forestry Tasmania expects, from this small 49-hectare coupe, to harvest 12,500 tonnes. As is often the way, more than half of these logs will be destined for the woodchip mill—some by-product!

Had Acting Deputy President Dastyari been lucky enough to get to Launceston to talk about the forestry managed investment scheme, he would have met John Lawrence in person. John Lawrence is well-respected economist,

accountant, commentator on financial matters and font of all knowledge in matters forestry and finance. He has estimated that Forestry Tasmania could expect to get about \$5,000 per hectare in revenue at current market rates. He also estimates that the cost of getting the logs out will be about \$6,000 per hectare, mostly because roads and bridges need to be built into the forest. This equates to a cash loss of \$50,000 for the entire coupe. On top of this, FT, Forestry Tasmania, will have to write down nearly \$200,000 in assets once the trees are chopped down. If we add carbon accounting costs, the opportunity costs of logging these trees, then what we are looking at is another loss-making proposition for Forestry Tasmania, which is going to do an incredible amount of damage to the social fabric of the community in the Wynyard area who have grown up around this beautiful piece of landscape.

So, in the time-honoured tradition of Tasmanian communities organising to try and stop their state government from destroying Tasmania's natural heritage—which is now at the forefront of Tasmania being one of the true tourism icons, not just in Australia but internationally, being recognised right across the board, by Lonely Planet and a whole range of different tourism publications; MONA even got into the top 20 international attractions for Lonely Planet—the community are coming together. I was very fortunate to be able to sneak in a couple of hours, before I flew out of Wynyard to Canberra last Sunday, to attend a fantastic rally in the local pub there. It was attended by 300 or 400 people.

This was the first time the community has come together in such numbers—to resist the stupidity of this coupe being logged, at a significant loss, and the damage it is going to do to the community. They want to see that stopped. I have been to the coupe and I have walked through the coupe. I have flown over it and got aerial footage for the community. I have talked to people there. I was very lucky to be given morning tea and a tour by Barbara and Stewart Hoyt, two of the key organisers of the community in the area. I spent a day with Dave Reid, who is another one of the community organisers, a stalwart for protecting what is valuable about the north-west of Tasmania. And I would like to recognise John Powell, Mike Buckley and a whole group of other people that have organised these rallies and got the community together. Over the last 18 months, they have been starting to put together a really logical and passionate approach to making sure that this coupe does not get logged—unprofitably logged at the expense of the taxpayer for no good reason at all when there are other timber resources available.

One of the reasons that they are struggling to be heard is the EPBC Act. There are a lot of the problems in that act. It is now 15 years old. It has worked in some ways, but it has fallen short in others. It was reviewed under the Rudd government and then it was reviewed and ditched under the Gillard government before it could be implemented.

The issue specifically with Lapoinya, of course, is that there is a large population of freshwater crayfish, not to mention Tasmanian devils and an incredible abundance of botany. Once you start taking out the management plan areas to protect the crayfish, there is really very little else left there to log. It really beggars belief that we would still be considering going into this place. But it is symbolic in Tasmania because the community will stand up to it. They will stand up and put it on the line to make sure this place does not get logged. I really hope that the Tasmanian government has a close look at this and walks away from it.

Another place that I will talk about another night is Bruny Island. It is truly a tourism icon within Tasmania. It is now going to be logged again. They are going to take logging trucks on the ferries to take the trees off Bruny Island. That is another issue that we are certainly going to be hearing a lot more about.

The Lapoinya action group have come together and I was very proud to be there to represent the Greens. This is the kind of environmental destruction that Tasmania needs to move on from and the kind of social destruction that Tasmania needs to move on from, and we need to find much better ideas for our future.