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## [Australia: A testimony of the loss of forests to Eucalyptus plantations and much more](#)

My family's individual struggle and victimisation is typical of what is happening across the populated and high-rainfall areas of rural Australia. In 1984 we moved to North West Tasmania and chose a relatively isolated area to live --one that was away from farms that used chemicals and where the stands of native bush were extensive and beautiful.

All that changed in the mid 1990s when the State and Federal Governments pushed the Regional Forest "Agreement" and the Plantations 2020 Vision onto ordinary citizens. The native forest was largely destroyed as a result and it was replaced by a huge monoculture tree plantation using an exotic [to Tasmania] species of Eucalyptus called 'Nitens'.

In 1997 we woke stunned to hear a bulldozer clearing the native trees only 60 feet away from our house. The loss of the trees we had loved threw us into shock and grief. But there was more to come.

The foreman from Forest Enterprises (a company that had just purchased the block of land next door) informed us that they would be aerial spraying Simazine mixed with other herbicides about 100 feet away from our house and almost over the top of a nearby creek.

We simply didn't believe that the State Government would allow such abuse of pesticides. So, I got onto the phone and confidently spoke with the Spray Complaints Unit. To our dismay we were told that the Code of Practice for Aerial Spraying did NOT ban such blatant negligence! It became clear in a short period of time that the bureaucracies were almost entirely disinterested in the situation. So, I moved my pleas for help onto the politicians.

To make a long story short it took about a hundred phone calls and a similar number of emails before some small changes were made to the herbicide application plans of the forest company. This issue had to be debated in parliament even though negotiations were limited to one single forest coupe! That is, the forest companies were (and continue to be) allowed to repeat negligent pesticide applications across the entire State.

Whether changes (adequate or otherwise) are made to protect water supplies relies entirely upon the degree of effort and/or skill at politicking that comes from a neighbour or a local community.

Might it not have been for the fact that residential drinking water tanks were (accidentally) found to be ALREADY contaminated with Simazine then the aerial application in the next paddock might have taken place after all. As it turned out glyphosate was applied in the swamp surrounding our household dam and Simazine in ground turned into a bog by heavy machinery only 10 metres from a creek in front of our house.

Currently agricultural and forestry enterprises are allowed to aerial spray residual and dangerous pesticides (and mixtures thereof) to heights of 100 feet to 200 feet up in Tasmania (!). This often happens in the middle of summer when the levels of water in our rainwater tanks is minimal.

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Residents are not provided with any form of notification.

The extensive Nitens Eucalypt monoculture has caused widespread beetle attack and so the forest corporations don't think twice about spraying Cypermethrin and other similar pesticides well above the tree canopies on a regular basis.

Simazine and other triazine herbicides are routinely used in both ground and aerial applications. They are routinely applied in wet areas across the state... in catchments where the ground is heavily disturbed and where creeks are subject to illegal bulldozer crossings.

The mood of residents has changed notably from concern about what is happening to outright ANGER. We are now seeking ways to sue bureaucrats and politicians for threatening our lives --for allowing murder and assault through the use of pesticides.

We no longer trust bureaucrats from the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment nor, of course, the Forestry Department. They both have a clear conflict of interest in its role of both promoting and instructing on the use of pesticides and regulating them at the same time. They have a long record of negligence and outright antagonism when it comes to protecting human health and the environment. We want access to funds to organise our own INDEPENDENT testing. Will the APVMA (Australian Pesticides & Veterinary Medicines Authority) provide this money?

The Federal Department of Environment has advised that they cannot force the State Government to police the application of pesticides. What good is the AVPMA then??? Are you just a PR exercise?

Excerpts from the letter by Brenda J. Rosser, E-mail: [shelter@tassie.net.au](mailto:shelter@tassie.net.au) , Spokesperson of the Tasmanian Clean Water Network, and the Waratah-Wynyard Residents Against Chemical Trespass, sent to David Loschke, Pesticides Division, commenting the AVPMA's draft document on spray drift.