

“In Support of Progress” A Newsletter

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FISHERIES

The imminent arrival of the trawler Margiris continues to stir the blood. Pollies are falling over themselves, at a State and Federal level, to demonstrate their concern that the seas will be denuded of fish.

As has been stated before, the science does not support their claims, and the denial of the science is particularly galling, considering these same individuals argue the need for acceptance of the science on climate change, a much more questionable proposition.

However, because this debate is entirely political, it makes it that much more difficult to gain support for this venture. All the more reason for the company and the scientists to be on the front foot, to be proactive in the media, to accept every offer to get the message across. Thus it was disappointing to hear on Tuesday morning that the company was unavailable for a comment, and that AFMA was unavailable for a comment. However come Wednesday morning, the company was prepared to front, and did well. They must do so more often, and get the discussion back on the front foot.

However, the attached paper was circulated today by the scientists, in support of their claim that the fishstocks will not be damaged at the level of quota set. Some further comment that the company would be happy to consider further operational controls on the catch, and a very considered and supportive comment from the TCCI.

Also it is good to see that the company's website is now up and running.

It would be nice to think that politicians could lead from the front on some issues, and not blindly follow the crowd.

FORESTRY

A meeting in Huonville was held on Monday night to discuss the present state of the forest debate and called for the disbandment of the IGA process. It was attended by over 250 people, and was addressed by a range of speakers, including the Opposition leader, the mayor of the Huon Valley Council, the President of the TFGA, the local Legislative Council member Paul Harriss, George Harris, and Michael Hirst (the farmer who camped under the Miranda tree).

It was one of a series of meetings held in rural communities throughout the state (others have already been held in Brighton and Scottsdale)

The meetings, which have been brought together by the Liberals, have been well attended, and have expressed legitimate concerns that the IGA talks have excluded many from the process, and is being led by conservationist demands.

In Parliament today, the Deputy Premier dismissed the meeting as a "tinpot turnout" and his comment was defended by the Premier. Without dwelling for too long on the lack of sensitivity displayed, the comment reflects a real disregard to the pain and suffering being felt in rural communities. It is true the government has been criticised for its position and for its handling of the IGA process, and that the comment by the Deputy Premier is a kneejerk response to this criticism, but it is also true that many people in these communities are not represented at the table, and are using these forums to be heard.

The government could do worse than to be more in tune with these folk. This issue goes to the heart of sustaining rural communities, and supporting economic growth and activity.

POWER

The SBS on Tuesday night ran a program which condemned the Hydro for having its consulting arm Entura provide assistance for the development of renewable energy in Sarawak.

The program was a misrepresentation of Hydro's role and Hydro on Wednesday responded. Hydro should demand a retraction from SBS for this misrepresentation, and demand it fast. If not, they will find this issues could become a significant distraction and demand an inordinate amount of management time. Maybe they should also demand compensation for any public relations costs that they might now have to meet.

Honesty in journalism should be de rigeur. No good the media complaining about restrictions to media freedoms, when at the same time programs such as this are allowed to air from "respectable" media organisations. Readers may also recall the nonsense program that was run a year or so ago regarding the St Helens water supply. Good sensational stuff, to be sure, but unfortunately no truth in the allegations.

Added to this conundrum has come the fanciful suggestion from the Greens on the weekend that a trading room operating in Hydro Tasmania be divided into three parts, separated by a "Chinese wall". These trading desks will no doubt compete with each other, assuring - or so it is argued - competition in the wholesale market. Even the most cursory of examinations would conclude that these desks would be competing against each other - a gain at one desk would be at the expense of another. Benefit to the taxpayer. Zip. Benefit to the consumer, negative, since there would be more administration involved in a carrying out the same function.

And I am sure that this comment is only one of many that can and should be mounted against such a dumb idea. When are we going to get a rational approach to such matters?

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