

Author: RENE HIDDING

Publisher: News Ltd

Publication: Weekly Times, Page 018 (Wed 15 Nov 2006)

## **Apple Isle bitten by the Greens**

Upper House reform is bad for Victoria because it will give the Greens too much power, argues RENE HIDDING

THE change to the Victorian Upper House is the dumbest thing any sovereign government could have done, especially when it had control of both Houses of Parliament.

The Bracks Government deliberately and coldly brought in a system that may have guaranteed the Greens control of Victoria's Upper House forever.

While the two major parties are head to head, behind the scenes the Greens will be running the show, as they did in Tasmania for years during the Green accords, when investment in the state ground to a halt.

In the 1990s in Tasmania, the Greens were extracting something from the government of the day, every single day. They brought Tasmania to its economic knees because they are very good at getting what they want behind the scenes.

As a current member of the Tasmanian Parliament, and former leader of the Opposition, I would like to warn Victoria that if they hold the balance of power in Victoria the hard-left Greens will take over the micro-management of policy, as they did to us.

Apart from the drying up of investment, I believe another effect will be that recreational and commercial users of public land will be particularly affected in Victoria.

The only hope is for concerned people to expose the Greens' policies, which look really good at first glance. It is only when you drill down that you realise the implications of what they're on about.

I challenge you to go and read, then analyse the Greens' policies and their website.

At election time, the Greens will pretend to drop controversial policies such as legalising drugs, imposing a capital gains tax on the family home and death taxes. Those policies will remain just under the surface and always emerge at the right time.

Australia has been settled for more than 200 years and the bush and our land are relatively unscathed, yet the Greens claim it is a disaster.

The Greens continue to claim Tasmania and its forests are an environmental disaster, despite the fact that 40 per cent of Tasmania's land mass (one million hectares) is locked up in national parks and reserves.

I want to make the point that it is always a question of balanced use for our land and our resources for the greater good and Victorians should remember that vital fact and not be dazzled by Green rhetoric.

For example, in Victoria, I have noticed that the Greens have adopted a mantra that all logging in catchments should cease, to save water.

They are being totally opportunistic with the drought situation we are in.

You will remember that only a couple of years ago, the mantra was that we should stop logging to save the animals.

With their demand that logging in catchments must stop, the Greens really mean all timber harvesting should cease, as almost everything that is harvested for timber in Victoria, is in a catchment.

Following the Greens' claims and logic further, that means the Greens (if they hold the balance of power in Victoria) will insist that Victoria stop all logging.

This will force Victoria to import all its timber needs or, alternatively, not use timber at all.

If timber harvesting is stopped in Victoria, its needs will be supplied from Asian rainforests.

Labor MHR Martin Ferguson claimed recently that between 9 per cent and 25 per cent of those forests are illegally logged.

When the Greens are confronted with these facts, they say plantations are the answer.

The facts are that the saw log plantations in the ground now (and when mature in a few years) can supply only 2 per cent of Victoria's current timber needs.

If enough future sawlog plantations are planted now, they will not be ready for 30 years.

What do the Greens say Victorians are supposed to do to obtain their timber needs in the meantime?

They can't answer that question logically, nor any other, and hide behind their mantras to avoid answering the hard issues.

***Rene Hidding is a former Liberal Opposition leader in Tasmania.***