

# SouthEastTIMBERassociation

South East Timber Association Inc PO Box 773 Eden NSW 2551

27 October 2015

Senator Janet Rice  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

## SUBJECT: HANSARD TRANSCRIPT 13 OCTOBER 2015

Dear Senator,

I am writing to you following comments made in your speech of 13 October 2015, regarding harvesting operations in the Glenbog State Forest in 2014. You have made allegations about the impact of those operations on the resident wombat population.

In your speech, you stated "In the Glenbog State Forest, over 100 wombats were buried alive by logging operations last year, despite local wildlife carers having identified and mapped their burrows and given this information to the Forestry Corporation."

As this comment relates to the operations undertaken by members of the South East Timber Association, I am writing to you on behalf of these members.

I understand that comments made in the parliament are generally subject to parliamentary privilege. In relation to this privilege, the Committee of Privileges has stated:

*"Allegations of wrongdoing are often made to Members of Parliament. Members enjoy very special rights—rights greater than those enjoyed by ordinary citizens. The privilege of freedom of speech is the greatest of these, but its very significance is such, where the reputation or welfare of persons may be an issue, that it should be used judiciously. If a Member is of the opinion that it is in the public interest to disclose such allegations, he or she should make all reasonable inquiries as to the truth of the allegations. The raising of a matter, in full detail, in the House is only one of the options available to Members. It is for the Member to resolve whether or not it is in the public interest to raise a matter in the House, and his or her actions will be judged accordingly"*

Given the comments above, I am writing to you to seek your advice as to what inquiries you have made as to the truth of the allegations. Up to this point in time, no evidence has been presented that would support your allegation.

I am aware of the photo of a dead wombat, which the Japan Tropical Forest Action Network have posted on the JATAN website and claim "wombat died during felling." I am also aware of the circumstances surrounding the delivery of this deceased wombat to the site approximately 4 weeks after felling had been completed and all machinery removed from the site.



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In terms of reasonable inquiries, I suggest the production of any EPA, RSPCA or police investigation reports would satisfy the "reasonable inquiries" test suggested by the Committee of Privileges.


Unfounded allegations published by the mainstream and social media would, in the opinion of SETA, not satisfy the test. I note that one petition site making allegations similar to yours closed down the petition, when evidence, which was contrary to allegation that over 150 wombats were buried alive, was presented to the petition site administrators.

If you are unable to produce the evidence the Association has requested, the Association expects that you will withdraw your allegations and issue an apology in the parliament and in all other mainstream and social media outlets currently hosting your allegation.

I would appreciate a response to my letter within 14 days.

Yours Faithfully

Stephen Pope  
PRESIDENT



cc: Hon B T G Joyce MP, Hon A A Ruston MP, Dr P W Hendy MP,

