

## ABC Apology to WA Industry

Some nine months after the original airing of the Four Corners program on the WA timber industry a 'claytons apology' from the ABC was broadcast nationally on 25 March 1991.

Commenting on the apology the Forest Industries Federation (WA) maintains its stance that the program was poor journalism because of clear bias and selective viewpoints and 'the apology does not cover all the allegations and we await a full and unconditional apology in due course'.

The full transcript of the ABC's apology is reproduced below for you to judge. We think any apology such as Four Corners is an achievement and congratulate the dedicated people in WA and elsewhere for their perservance.

### *ABC Four Corners Apology to WA Timber Industry*

On June 18 last years, 4 Corners transmitted a program entitled "The Wood for the Trees" which investigated logging in Western Australia. The program drew a number of complaints from the Executive Director of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Dr Syd Shea. An initial investigation ordered by the Managing Director found two shortcomings in the program.

First that CALM denied a particular mill access to first grade logs. The inquiry held that the program should have stated: "For years, CALM's predecessor, the Forests Department denied this mill access to first grade logs. This was rectified the year after CALM was established."

Secondly, the initial enquiry acknowledged that 4 Corners failed to identify Dr. Shea's daughter and that the words accompanying the film may have been inappropriate. The ABC denied and continues to deny that there was any unethical personal attack on Dr Shea.

However, following further complaints, under Section 82 of the ABC Act which relates to alleged errors of fact or invasion of privacy the ABC undertook a further investigation which finds as follows:

- A statement that that for first grade Karri logs the target royalty was \$34.00 per cubic metre, was incorrect. This is the figure for current royalty. The target royalty is actually \$38.00.
- The program depicted tree felling in an area of forest it claimed was a wildlife corridor. The investigation has been unable to establish that it was a wildlife corridor and therefore upheld the complaint.
- A statement that an area of Jarrah forest subject to logging was about 300 square kilometres each year was incorrect. The investigation was unable to obtain clear data from CALM. It was found that the area subject to logging fluctuated between 185 and 240 square kilometres.
- The program's allegation that an area known as Hawkes Block was clear felled after it was listed by the Heritage Commission was in error - the clear felling and regeneration of Hawkes Block took place before it was listed by the Heritage Commission.
- The program stated that it was CALM's policy to 'log after only 100 years.' At no stage has it been possible to prove, or indeed disprove, that CALM has a policy to log after only 100 years and again in these circumstances the complaint was upheld.
- The investigation was unable to establish the truth of a statement contained in the program that log prices were the closest kept secrets in the south western timber industry'. Given conflicting sworn statements, a finding was not made as credibility of either party but it was found that the program failed to justify its claim.

In respect of the findings of specific issues the ABC apologises. However the ABC stands by the general intent of the program which raised serious and legitimate complaints about the conduct of the logging industry in Western Australia.