

SouthEastTIMBERassociation

Activists – Endanger Road Users

One form of direct action protest has been to blockade access roads to deny workers their right to safe access to their workplace. While the following examples are from south east NSW similar safety risks highlighted below also affect road users in other parts of Australia.

On 17 December 2001, for the first time, a single strand of 8mm wire rope was strung across Edrom Road to stop log trucks and Harris Daishowa (HDA) employees gaining access to the chip mill. Edrom Road was also blocked by a tripod 1km west of the cable. There were no warning signs and no organised traffic control put in place by the protestors, who included a long-term anti forest activist Scott Daines.

After at least one car had gone under the cable, traffic coming onto Edrom Road from Greencape Road were flagged down by two protestors standing in the middle of the road. There was no one east of the cable to warn any traffic coming from the mill, Edrom Lodge, a tourist accommodation venue, or private residences on the northern side of Edrom Road.

On 14 January 2002, another tripod was set up on Edrom Road near the Greencape Road turnoff at about 5am. This obstruction did not cause any disruption to traffic, as shortly after setup, the occupant of the tripod fell to the surface of Edrom Road. The fall victim still carries the effects of the broken bones and dislocations he suffered.

For more details on the injuries sustained and the evacuation plan in place on that morning, Harriett Swift and Keith Hughes, two more long-term anti forestry activists should be consulted. As no photos are available for that day, below is a photo of an occupied tripod that was used to block Edrom Road on 17 January 2011. This highlights the risk tripod occupants expose themselves to.



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On 24 April 2002, another tripod and ropes were again used to block Edrom Road.

The next time 8mm steel cable was used to block Edrom Road was on 26 February 2003. As in previous events, no proper traffic control was put in place. Sometime after the cable was strung across the road, a car coming from the private property, in the darkness, ran into the steel cable crossing the road surface just above sedan bonnet height. Fortunately, the nylon rope securing one end of the steel cable snapped, but not before the cable had begun to cut into the windscreen pillars of the Ford Laser sedan.



Damage to Ford Sedan Caused by 8mm Cable

One of the protest organisers was Andrew Wong an employee of the Wilderness Society. He is very fortunate that it wasn't a motor bike rider that encountered the cable or else he would have been facing more serious charges than those listed below.

Andrew Wong, pleaded guilty to "cause obstruction" and "malicious damage," in return for the charge of "knowingly permit a trap to be set" being dropped. He was also ordered to pay damages to the car owner.

In the normal course of business, it could be expected that the Wilderness Society (TWS), an employer, with obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, in force at the time, would ensure this sort of behaviour would not continue. However, all that changed is that no attendee at subsequent protests have identified themselves as TWS employees.



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Since that incident, a tripod was again used to block Edrom Road on 16 February 2005, and on 17 and 19 January 2011.

On 26 April 2007, a heavy duty nylon rope, attached to an occupied tree-sit, was strung across Edrom Road to stop traffic. Again no proper traffic control was in place. The first vehicle to approach the blockade was a 62 tonne GVM B double loaded with pine bound for the log export yard near the end of Edrom Road.

As he passed the explosives ordinance depot, the driver noticed what appeared to be a small fire on the side of the road at the end of the straight. Fortunately, he was able to stop in time to avoid running over the large branches other debris that had been dragged onto the road, as an initial barricade to protect the occupant of the tree-sit in the gully down around the next bend.



Harriett Swift, Scott Daines and Others Blocking Edrom Road April 2007

Many other forest roads have been blocked by activists, with potential to cause a serious accident. On 25 May 2010 at approximately 4,45am, in total darkness, 2 forestry workers rounded a bend on Clarkes Road, Mumbulla State Forest, to be met with the first of 3 steel post and debris barricades across the road. Wood, rocks and other debris littered the road for over 2 kilometres.

On the return journey, the following video was shot to provide evidence of the extent of the debris field and the stupidity of the persons unknown that undertook this irresponsible action. No warning of any sort was provided to road users.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IR1Sx1jcu8>



Barrier Across Clarkes Road Mumbulla State Forest

Given the act of violence includes intimidation by threat and unlawful exercise of force, there is clear evidence to demonstrate that forest protests are not “non-violent.” The non-violent label used by forest activists is nothing more than political spin, readily lapped up by a sympathetic media.

Aside from the criminal and ongoing Work Health and Safety breaches, one can only wonder how some businesses are able to maintain registration as a charity.