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Wombats, Lies & Social Media

Background

An examination of the Glenbog Wombat campaign highlights how activists use social media, compliant or complicit journalists and a total lack of knowledge of the topic, to turn some damage to up to 10 wombat burrows into a “massacre” of over 150 wombats. These lies and misrepresentations are broadcast to local and international audiences.

This examination will also highlight the role of particular individuals and organisations in initiating, then magnifying and spreading the lies.

Key People Involved in Promoting a False and Malicious Campaign



Kirsty Needham

Sydney Morning Herald 10 August 2014

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/animals/wombats-buried-alive-by-logging-company-20140809-10251m.html>

Ms Needham had an article published in the Sydney Morning Herald (part of the fading Fairfax media empire) on 10 August 2014 claiming “Forestry Corporation of NSW has buried wombats alive in their burrows, causing slow deaths, despite a deal with wildlife groups to protect the animals during logging.”

But Marie and Ray Wynan, who run a wildlife sanctuary at a neighbouring property, said contractors ignored the special conditions, and they discovered nine collapsed and blocked burrows soon after logging began. Four burrows were so compacted by machinery and logs they couldn't be re-opened. In one case, a dirt road was built over the top of the burrow.

‘The wombats have not been able to dig themselves out. They have died,’ said Ms Wynan, director of the Wombat Protection Society, who photographed the devastation.

After EPA officers were sent from Sydney to investigate the deaths, a Forestry Corporation spokeswoman admitted “some entrances have been disturbed”.

So with the backing of one of the largest media organisations in Australia, along with a staged photo, the initial allegations became fact and as the days go by, one liar after another create a fable with international coverage.

Cooma-Monaro Express 14 August 2014

At the local level, the Cooma-Monaro Express could do no more than reprint the press release from **Evan Quatermain** from Humane Society International (HSI) and **Josey Sharrad** from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). Lazy journalism and a staged photo with misleading caption.



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<http://www.coomaexpress.com.au/story/2485584/wombats-buried-alive-in-glenbog-state-forest/>

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/the-glenbog-blog/hsi-and-ifaw-appalled-at-wanton-live-burial-of-wombats/825507834134178>

The greatest fund raising opportunity for animal activist groups are allegations of animal cruelty. It is not in the interests of HIS or IFAW to ensure their press release is factually correct.

Anthony Sharwood – News.com.au 15 August 2014

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/technology/wombats-buried-by-logging-in-glenbog-state-forest-in-possibly-deliberate-marsupial-massacre/story-fnjww5vj-1227025608784>

The Sharwood article in the Brisbane Courier Mail claimed ***“THIS is a story of wombaticide, and the shocking allegations behind a marsupial massacre. It’s also a story about animals of the two-legged variety***

Earlier this week, it emerged that a logging operation in the Glenbog State Forest in southern New South Wales may have buried up to 150 bare-nosed wombats. This gross act of wombaticide occurred despite two dedicated locals marking wombat burrows so that loggers could avoid them.”

There is still no evidence to support any wombats being buried alive, let alone up to 150. Is Sharwood quoting Ray and Marie Wynan, the two dedicated locals or did he manufacture the lie so he could use the catchy “Marsupial Massacre” and “Wombaticide” allegations in the article? Whoever fabricated the lie, intended to incite public outrage to get public support for their anti-native forest harvesting campaign.



The incitement certainly worked, with intellectual elitist, Val, commenting *“Unbelievable cruelty. Signs don't bother these people. Half of them can't read anyway.”*



Class elitist, Steve, stated *“I'm sure the low life scum that perpetrated this act thought it was a laugh. The working classes tend to be desensitized to violence - it just isn't blokey to care.”*

Marie and Ray Wynan

The Wynan’s initially approached the Forestry Corporation of NSW with concerns about the proposed harvesting of compartments in Glenbog State Forest adjacent to their property. The Wynan’s have been very successful in attracting the attention of animal and forest activists, greens party politicians and media outlets.

Whether the Wynan’s made the initial allegation that up to 150 wombats may have been buried is no longer relevant. Their failure to correct the allegations contained in the Sharwood article shows that they have been complicit in what has become,



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not just a national, but an international campaign. Marie Wynan has even been prepared to perpetuate activists, journalists and politicians lies, by promoting the petition posted by Georgina B and a video of Janet Rice's (Victorian Greens senator) speech in the federal parliament, claiming over 100 wombats were buried alive.

Posted 30 March 2015. [Marie Wynan](#) shared a [link](#).

[Yesterday at 3:41pm](#)



[Petition: Demand justice for 150 wombats buried alive by a logging company](#)

“A logging company in New South Wales, Australia has buried at least 150 bare-nosed wombats while they were still alive.

..... however, wildlife experts say they just have one entrance in and out, so if it is ploughed over the wombats are subject to a slow death due to lack of food and water.”

These lies are meant to trigger outrage in anyone who might read the post. In this case the Wynan's and Georgina B's strategy has clearly worked, with one petitioner [Pim van Gestel](#) stating *“Those people should be shot them self. They have only respect for money.”* The experience of landowners with resident wombat populations does not support the opinion of the supposed wildlife experts quoted by Georgina B.

Before we get to more of the activist liars who have started petitions, let us first take a look at the gullibility of the general public when they don't understand the subject matter and they are fed emotive language.

Penn and Teller, American magicians and entertainers have highlighted the ease with which “environmental” activists can gather signatures for their cause. By using emotional language and playing on the desire of their audience to join a cause, hundreds of signatures are gathered on a petition to ban water. No lies needed.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yi3erdgVVTw&index=45&list=PLu7ib8D6dYeHXRrjlguyfF_f1ox-79JGN



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When you are prepared to lie and make unfounded accusations of animal cruelty, is it possible to con 130,000 people? Just ask **Georgina B**.

Georgina B

Georgina B is a serial petitioner on a range of animal issues. Never take any of her petitions at face value. It appears that she either does not check the facts or else she deliberately lies and exaggerates to incite people to make threatening comments, as was the case with Ms van Gestel.

As few as three key strokes away from Marie Wynan's initial allegations, we have people suggesting bush workers, who have not done, what Georgina B alleges, should be shot.

To have a successful campaign, aside from the traditional media, the full range of social media is used by activists to spread the message.

Marcus Foth

<http://staff.qut.edu.au/staff/foth/>

Marcus Foth started a petition on the Getup communityrun.org petition site. Foth has shown that being a professor is no barrier to plagiarism. He has plagiarised parts of Sharwood's article and through his petition, provides a clear example of the declining tertiary education standards, particularly at the professorial level.

Foth's petition states: "*Marie and Ray Wynan, members of the Wombat Protection Society, have been reporting a logging operation in the Glenbog State Forest in southern New South Wales which caused up to 150 bare-nosed wombats to be buried alive by purposefully destroying and covering their burrows.*"

<https://www.communityrun.org/petitions/investigate-and-bring-to-justice-the-killers-of-the-marsupial-massacre-in-glenbog-state-forest>

From his distant office at the Queensland University of Technology he has added embellishments to a topic he knows nothing about. A closer look at Foth does beg the question. Is someone who takes a photo of a speedo at 201 kilometers per hour while driving on a public road, even if in Germany, have the maturity to be mentoring university students?



Foth, the Research Leader in the Creative Industries Facility at the QUT must have done a course in creative writing to produce the wombat dung below.

"Wombats may not be an endangered species of animal yet, but they, too, are an Australian icon, unique, and loved and treasured by all Australians. The purposeful killing and murder of wombats on this scale is outrageous and cold-hearted. Imagining wombat families



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panicking, then slowly suffocating and dying in their burrows which loggers turned into their own graves is brutal and horrendous. Considering this was done because of laziness and the pursuit of financial profit, is heart breaking and reckless. We cannot let this go without an investigation, and without the alleged perpetrators being brought to justice.”

Foth has been given two opportunities, through his petition site, to provide evidence to support his ego-centric lies. To date he has failed to respond. Meanwhile, he has his nose firmly in the public trough to the tune of \$3,600,000 in national competitive grants and industry funding. What industry has money to waste on this tall poppy?



Linda Dennis

Linda Dennis is a regional coordinator for the Australian Wildlife Society. The Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove is patron of the society. On 27 June 2014, Ms Dennis wrote about why she had started the Glenbog Blog, which has been a key source of misinformation in the Glenbog wombat campaign. Ms Dennis wrote:

“4. Sign the petition

Over the next few weeks we hope to gain enough signatures to our petition that will be sent to the Forestry Corporation of NSW and EPA. The petition will call for increased protection of both flora and fauna within Glenbog State Forest. The petition is currently being created so watch this space!”

Akira Harada

In addition to the petition campaign, eco-fascist organisations are also denigrating the forest industries in southeast NSW. Akira Harada, from the **Japan Tropical Forest Action Network** (JATAN) has been harassing Japanese paper companies and their customers by using false and misleading information about the alleged mass murder of wombats in the Glenbog State Forest.

The following photo and caption was uploaded to the JATAN website. It is part of a letter signed by Harada.



Figure 1: images of Wombat died during felling

Harada is so desperate to progress his lie based campaign that he is claiming that the photo above, taken by the **Wombat Protection Society**, shows a wombat killed by the



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logging operation. Anyone with limited knowledge would suspect that this was a staged photo, given the age of the harvest debris and the fresh, un-bloated state of the dead wombat.

When liars are dealing with an ignorant audience, through the mass or social media, they do not have to justify obvious flaws in their story. This photo has also featured in another lie riddled post on the JATAN website and also on the face-book site of the failed Greens party candidate, Margaret Perger.

Why is this photo staged? You could ask Ray or Marie Wynan or Akira Harada, but don't expect a straight answer. At the time the staged photo was taken, the harvesting crew had not been in the area for over five weeks. The wombat had "appeared" at the site on the day the photo was taken.

It should be noted that the people, who have written most of the Glenbog wombat material used by JATAN, have been very careful not to say that the wombat was killed during the harvesting operation. Unfortunately, Akira Harada has been so desperate to prove that wombats were killed by the harvesting crew, he was dumb enough to make an allegation that is not supported by his own photographic evidence.

Janet Rice

A Victorian Greens party senator in the federal parliament, Janet Rice toured the Eden area in October 2015, a year after the harvesting operation ended. Following the visit to the Wynan's wombat sanctuary, Rice stood in the federal cowards castle on 13 October 2015 and said *"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."*

For those who use the protection of parliament to promote their lies, 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"

Consequently, on 27 October 2015, the SETA president wrote to Senator Rice to request that she provide advice on what reasonable enquiries she had made and what evidence she had to support her accusation. As is the case with most greens and activists, when their lies are challenged, they have neither the courtesy or the courage to admit that they are liars.



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David Shoebridge

As one of the architects of the Greens party pre-election policy to close down the NSW native forest based industry in 2016, it is no surprise that David Shoebridge should get involved and use the NSW parliament as his coward's castle to give political support to this malicious campaign.

Shoebridge has a history of bullying and denigrating people who work in the forest industry in southeast NSW. He regularly uses the NSW parliament to deliver his brand of social justice in support of the Wynan's and other anti-forestry campaigns.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHRdwUIU2LI>

<http://davidshoebridge.org.au/2014/10/29/glenboq-state-forest-speech/>

Monica - Raw Soaps

There are many other bit players helping to spread the Wombat lies. One business called Raw Soaps promotes the sale of the company products, in part, through support of various campaigns. One campaign supported by Raw Soaps is headed, "NO MORE RAINFOREST DESTRUCTION." Under a photo of a female urangutan and her baby is written:

"Indonesia's beautiful rainforests - home to orang-utans, elephants, tigers, rhinoceroses - are being torn up to make cheap paper. APRIL, an Indonesian pulp and paper company, is one of the largest drivers of this deforestation.

Shockingly, however, APRIL's products are still being sold in Australia by Office Choice and Office National. Tell them to stop buying from rainforest destroyers!"

<http://www.rawsoaps.com.au/causes-supported-by-raw-soaps/>

Ironically, an even bigger destroyer of rainforest, than the companies growing plantations to make paper, are the companies growing palm oil to make consumer goods including the type of soap. Ironically, Monica's soap products contain palm oil. While Monica's Raw Soaps is firmly committed to sustainable sourcing of palm oil, it should be remembered that:

"The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil does not rule out the clearing of rainforest. Only primary and "high conservation value" (HCV) forests have been considered off-limits for palm oil plantations under the label since November 2005. An internationally recognized definition of HCV areas has not been established, however, and the transitions between primary and secondary rainforests are blurred in practice."

<https://www.rainforest-rescue.org/topics/palm-oil>

Monica has been one of many individuals who have contributed to the spread of the lie that "A logging company in New South Wales, Australia has buried at least 150 bare-nosed wombats while they were still alive."

Despite a written request by a SETA supporter, who provided a link to the EPA report, Monica has refused to remove the material, which she now knows to be false and misleading. If you know anyone that buys the Raw Soap brand, take Monica's advice above and tell them to stop buying from rainforest destroyers!



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9 Months After the Harvest Operation

The infamous burrow number 352, heroically reopened 3 times by Ray Wynan to allow wombat access to the burrow.



Despite the claim that wombats are not able to dig out of a burrow that has a blocked entrance, hundreds of Australian farmers would beg to differ. From the amount of debris adjacent to the burrow entrance, any self-respecting wombat would have cleared the entrance in 5 minutes, without the drama concocted by the Wynan's.

The first photo below, shows a burrow with harvesting activity within 3 metres of the burrow entrance. If the accusations of wanton destruction of wombat burrows were true, why has this and so many other burrows scattered through the harvest area escaped unscathed? The other 2 photos show the natural tree and limb fall that from time to time fall across burrow entrances, with little apparent inconvenience to the resident wombat.



Like the Shakespeare play, it would appear that looking through the hysteria of the alleged wombat slaughter reveals the Glenbog wombat campaign was *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Unfortunately, unlike the Shakespeare comedy, this farce was malicious in intent and carried out by a number of deceitful individuals and organisations.

NB Links and other details current at October 2015.

