

## **March in March 24/3/24 Address to rally**

Acknowledge traditional owners Djiringanj people; respects to elders past, present and emerging.

The campaign to save the south east forests is the longest continuously running environmental campaign in Australia. It's into its sixth decade now.

Listening to the previous speakers, we get a pretty clear idea of how it's been a long hard struggle but also – importantly - why it's so worth winning.

We have had some wins along the way and those wins have better prepared us for the big battle ahead – to end native forest logging once and for all.

You can actually see a couple of those wins from here – Mumbulla now part of the Biamanga National Park and Tanja, now part of the Murrah Flora Reserve.

Dan - earlier - gave us a fabulous First Nations' perspective and I'd like to just build on that by giving credit to traditional owners as winners!

I'll never forget a photo I once saw of Guboo Ted Thomas standing resolutely in front of a bulldozer up on Mumbulla Mountain when the woodchippers were moving in to log there. He won! And saved most of it.

Some years later when the woodchippers returned to log remaining parts of Mumbulla State Forest, the First Nations people were in the front line again and can claim much of the credit for saving it - along with the other locals who turned up to blockade the logging every morning for 3 months - the whole of Mumbulla, Tanja, Murrah and Bermagui south of the river are now safe in the Flora Reserve.

Some of our wins haven't always been as easy to see. I'll mention a few. It wasn't that long ago that woodchip exports from Eden were well over 1 million tonnes a year. Every year!

In the last few years they've been about one third of that. This wasn't just good luck and exports were falling well before the bushfires. It was also due to lots of hard work by forest campaigners here and in Japan.

Without that hard work we would have a wood fired power station at the chipmill and a charcoal plant at Mogo. They were never built because of strong community campaigns against it.

Along the way we had another small win –the first instance of a company being chastised by the Corporate Regulator, ASIC for greenwashing. The chipmill owners were told that they mustn't refer to their plans for wood fired power as "green" energy. That hasn't stamped out greenwashing, but it has made them a bit more cautious.

Some might be thinking: so what? This is all ancient history and maybe it is. But imagine if all of these projects had got up. It wouldn't just have meant even more forest logged, it would have provided a cash flow to the industry and maybe even made it profitable. They were very real and serious threats at the time. Had we not succeeded in stopping them, it would be much harder to end native forest logging. That's a real prospect now!

So, we're getting there and everyone who turned up today can take some of the credit when we achieve that goal and make the forests safe for the greater gliders, the koalas and other wildlife and of course, the climate. Thanks so much, everyone. Let's get on with it!

