



LUCY TURNER (FOREGROUND) AND OTHER LFF MEMBERS IN A RECENTLY LOGGED AREA IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

greening the profession

by Anna Stewart, Deacons

Many of you will have read the article on Lawyers for Forests ("LFF") in the May 2001 edition of the *LIV Journal*. If so, you would know that LFF was initially set up by Lucy Turner, a young lawyer at Corrs Chambers Westgarth. Lucy was inspired by the significant impact the green movement, and particularly the anti-logging movement, had on the outcome of the WA election late last year, and decided that legal professionals had a valuable role to play in the debate surrounding the future of our native forests. LFF was officially launched by Justice Murray Wilcox of the Federal Court, at Flagstaff Chambers on 10 May 2001.

There are currently 3 sub-committees in LFF, focussing on the following areas:

1. Access to justice

LFF believes that peaceful protest is a legitimate form of civil expression and a valuable part of democracy.

Unfortunately, sometimes protests between loggers and conservationists can end in violent confrontations. With this in mind, one of the aims of the Access to Justice section is to ensure that conservationists taking part in protests are fully informed of their **rights** and **responsibilities**. The section believes that by providing pro bono legal advice to protesters before, during and after a protest, the likelihood of confrontation between police, conservationists and loggers will be significantly reduced. Further, by providing this service, LFF hopes to foster a better informed, more peaceful and ultimately more effective culture of public protest.

The Access to Justice section is currently compiling a list of barristers

and solicitors willing to undertake pro bono services for conservation groups and individuals, and already the group has had a number of requests for assistance. In addition, the section recently drafted a submission on behalf of LFF in relation to the state government's *Peaceful Assemblies Bill*. The Bill proposes to give power to police to use force to disperse any assembly they believe may involve unlawful damage to property or violence. LFF was concerned that such legislation could effectively see the end of the right to protest in Victoria.

2. Law and policy

The Law and Policy section is focussed on analysing the regulatory framework relating to the management of Victoria's public native forests. LFF is worried about the scientific basis on which conservation decisions are made, the flawed economics underpinning the logging industry, and the influence woodchipping companies seem to have over the government in terms of its decision making process. Further, LFF believes that the laws applicable to our native forests are deficient and inadequate, and are in need of reform.

This section of LFF is also involved in lobbying, and assisting other groups to lobby, both state and federal governments to ensure that any decisions made in relation to our forests, are done so in strict adherence to the law. It is important to note that LFF made a conscious decision early on to be non-party political, and this lack of political allegiance ensures that the group is able to provide a balanced and impartial critique of the major political parties' positions on forest issues.

3. Corporate Awareness

The Corporate Awareness section of LFF aims to encourage more environmentally sensitive policies to be implemented by logging companies and paper manufacturers, as well as in our own workplaces. Projects currently being undertaken by the group include:

- (a) the development of a Forest Friendly Work Policy to present to law firms and then broader corporates, which reduces paper use, and avoids papers and pulp products from unsustainable sources in favour of recycled or environmentally sensitive alternatives; and
- (b) the development of a Superannuation and Ethical Investment Policy to encourage law firms to offer their employees a choice of which entities their superannuation funds are invested in. It is hoped that with the assistance of ethical investment consultants, and groups such as the Wilderness Society, LFF will be able to compile a list of ethical investment options, which can then be provided to law firms.

Although the group's membership is steadily growing, LFF is constantly looking for enthusiastic new members and lawyers willing to assist with pro bono matters, so if you are passionate about the environment and are interested in finding out more about LFF visit the website at www.lawyersforforests.asn.au or email lawyersforforests@yahoo.com.au or write to PO Box 550, Collins Street West, Melbourne 3000.