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To Whom It May Concern:

Today, I drove with my Canadian partner and her parents (who are visiting Australia for the very first time) from Tathra to Bermagui, stopping at Aragannu for a swim.

Our journey took in some of the most spectacular and pristine coastlines and forested areas that this country has to offer and it made me so very proud to be Australian while championing the natural beauty to my in-laws who have travelled so far to experience something so special and unique. While here their visit will also take in Tantawangalo Forest, Alexanders Hut, Myrtle Mountain Look Out and koala and platypus observation field excursions. Yesterday they saw their first red-bellied black snake at Pamboola reserve. I'm gaining serious brownie points!

This may seem like a small deal, driving around with in-laws, taking in cafes, galleries, museums, introducing them to vanilla slices and real coffee etc. but it is a huge deal to me.

The huge deal is that the extended RFA must invigorate a bias that puts conservation and the expansion of wilderness, regrowth forests, water systems and ocean health front and centre.

You can't just remake a wilderness after its been chopped down.

Biodiversity within mature forest ecosystems is so complex and interdependent that no amount of well-intentioned replanting will recreate it. It's not Lego or Ikea, drop in a few saplings and wave around your allen key, invite a goanna over and hey presto, wilderness! I'm trying to be funny because this is such an unfunny situation, the prospect of eliminating more forests, destroying wilderness, running native animals out of their habitat to ... nowhere, man, what a mess we're making of this.

The degree of disconnect between us and our habitat is so complete that you're made to feel like a left wing greenie idiot for wanting wilderness whereas if you're championing a handful of primary production jobs to mash native forests into overseas toilet paper products and short term profits ... well that makes you economically virtuous and socially acceptable. Right.

Monologue aside. Let's re-imagine the RFA and make it wilderness and plantation centric.

It has been our own short sightedness that has created a woeful imbalance in the stock of plantation timber that has subsequently created the pressure to destroy native forest and their ecosystems. Lets fix that. That feels doable, right? Develop plantations in marginal rural areas, protect and expand wilderness and native forest. Who's going to complain? That's the win-win the politicians love, more wilderness, more jobs, more votes, more lattes and vanilla slices with visiting in-laws as we take in the natural wonder and beauty of this amazing country of ours. That feels doable, right?

Thanks for reading

Dave