

The 1970s as a time of transition for Western Australian native forests protest

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ABSTRACT: New threats to Western Australia's native forests influenced the employment of different protest strategies by environmentalists. The 1970s was a transitional period, during which 'protest' came to be associated with contemporary notions of direct action, as opposed to more traditional forms of passive dissent. Early methods of protest were founded upon a desire to ensure that portions of the natural environment were preserved for future generations. The landscape was conceptualised in terms of its aesthetic, heritage and scientific value, with little opposition to the dominant view that the commercial exploitation of natural resources was an essential ingredient in the recipe for economic and social progress. While the 1950s and 1960s witnessed improvements in the organisation and co-ordination of environmental group activity in Western Australia, particularly with the formation of the Nature Conservation Council, forms of protest were largely non-confrontational, and took place within an institutional framework. The 1970s marked a turning-point for forest protest, when public sensitivities were awakened to a realisation that the State's native forests were rapidly disappearing. It was the hostility aroused over the decision to exploit the forests for a wood chip export industry that provided the catalyst for more radical forms of protest action. At this time there also emerged a new generation of activists who were able to adapt and enhance the strategies of their predecessors to meet the new challenges that lay before them.

1 INTRODUCTION

A number of commentators have evaluated the significance of the 1970s as a period of growth for the Australian environmental movement. They agree that the contemporary green movement's foundation can be traced to the decade's early years, and that it resulted from increasing environmental awareness at that time (Burgmann 2003 p. 166, Dargavel 1995, p. 162). While earlier organisations had exhibited deep concerns for conservation issues by conducting campaigns, their efforts were largely disregarded within the prevailing political climate (Burgmann 2003). The mounting conflict over land use plus a new appreciation of the intrinsic value of the forests combined to produce both an emotive force and an intense political debate. Together they forced a re-appraisal of land use patterns to accommodate the interests of the conservation and recreation lobby (Havel 1989, p.312). Most importantly, the 1970s was a time of opportunity for the Australian environment movement, when a new generation of activists reflected an innovative and more forceful style of activism (Hutton and Connors 1999, p.126).

This paper will examine how new directions in native forests protest evolved within Western Australia. Specifically, the paper examines how increasing pressure on the State's forests and an

emerging environmental radicalism resulted in the adoption of different strategies and the construction of fresh approaches to forests protest. It argues that during the 1970s a transition occurred, in which passive expressions of dissent were gradually replaced by forms of activism associated with more contemporary notions of direct action.

2 FORESTS OR LAND?

State government records provide evidence of a growing crisis over resources demands. The 1970 annual report of the Forests Department voiced reservations about mining expansion in the forests:

The current level of mining activity in forests areas is of major concern. The over-riding powers of the Mining Act in respect of State Forests and timber reserves which date from the early days of gold mining coupled with the marked increase of mining activity, has given rise to the greatest threat the forest estate has experienced ... more than half the area of State Forest is subject to some form of mining claim or tenement. (Forests Department 1970, p.11)

The 1970 report observed that mining was contributing to forest loss at greater than anticipated rates. For example, it was first estimated that bauxite mining at Jarrahdale would result in an annual loss of 35 acres of forest. However, the mine expanded and 300 acres were lost each year. While some 1,200 acres had been cleared since 1965, only about 300 acres had actually been mined. The Department's anxieties over the forest decline reflected a desire to protect a valuable industrial resource for production forestry rather than any overriding concern for forest conservation (Forests Department 1970, p.14).

The Forest Department's observations did not result in any modification of forestry practices. In October 1974, the member of parliament for Warren, the Hon. David Evans MLA, elicited an acknowledgement from the Minister for Forests that the State's hardwood forests had been over-cut for some time in order 'to support the established industry' (WA Parliamentary Debates 1974a). Further questions revealed that the level of over-cutting had not been reported in the Department's annual reports (WA Parliamentary Debates 1974b). Paradoxically, the practice of over-cutting the forest was occurring while the Forests Department was promoting sustainable forest management (Rundle 1996, p.237).

In the early 1970s, Western Australia's native forests faced an increasing threat from industrial exploitation. The State Government's attitude was characterised by a reluctance to reduce the level of timber-cutting in the face of industry demands, even though government was aware of over-cutting and knew that the forests were rapidly depleting.

3 AN EMERGING CLIMATE OF RADICALISM

The early 1970s radicalisation of Western Australia's native forests protest movement occurred both as a reaction to State government forest conservation inactivity and as a reflection of a number of broader social and political forces for change. It was a time when new political leadership offered the promise of radical reform, and when the impact of the anti-Vietnam marches was still fresh in activist's minds. Most significantly, Perth environmental groups had the social infrastructure for interacting and co-ordinating their activities.

The 1972 election of the Whitlam Labor government raised high expectations that environmental protection would be absorbed into the political mainstream. In Western Australia a foundation for Perth's environmental activism was laid by the federal government's 1974 establishment of Regional Environment Centres. The Environment Centre in Wellington Street became the home for several organisations, including the Conservation Council of Western Australia, the Campaign to Save Native Forests (WA) (CSNF), Friends of the Earth (FOE), and the Campaign Against Nuclear Energy (CANE) (Kearns 2004, pp. 15-16). With the exception of the Conservation Council, which was formed in 1967, the other groups were all established during the early 1970s. The Centre not

only provided the infrastructure for the organisation of co-ordinated protest action, but also a social milieu that encouraged group members to feel they were part of a dynamic movement for change (Hutchison 2004).

Radical approaches to environmental activism were inspired by events occurring elsewhere in Australia. The 1970s Green Ban campaign in New South Wales resulted in an alliance between environmentalists and trade unionists. Together they preserved areas of urban bushland from commercial development. This activity resonated in Western Australia. An August 1975 public meeting in Perth Town Hall was organised by the CSNF. It called for the implementation of a union green ban to prevent the Manjimup Wood Chip Project from proceeding. This decision resulted in a CSNF request to the Western Australia Trade and Labour Council for industrial action (Cook 1976). A further formative influence on the growth and character of Perth's environmental activism was the anti-Vietnam War movement. Andrew Thamo, a founder member of the CSNF, was actively involved in the campaign, and considers it to have been 'a very important component for all of us that actually formed the nucleus of what was to become the Campaign to Save Native Forests' (Thamo 2004).

One of the most visible indications of changing attitudes towards Australian environmental protest occurred on 17 October 1973. The Australian Conservation Foundation's conservative approach to environmental issues was criticized. Particularly problematic was perceived inactivity in the struggle to preserve Lake Pedder. As a result seven councillors resigned, including one from Western Australia (Warhurst 1991). Graeme Rundle, who was a State Councillor to the ACF, said that changes exerting an influence on Western Australia were prompted by the election of more campaign-oriented members:

The sorts of campaign innovations which came out of fighting for Lake Pedder were also relayed through the Western Australian membership of the ACF back into the Western Australian conservation community, and that included eventually the Conservation Council. (Rundle 2003)

During the early 1970s new approaches towards Western Australian forest protest resulted from conflict between increasing industrial pressure on the State's forest resources and the influences of an expanding radicalism. The decade's early years also provided the stimulus that propelled the forest protest movement into action.

4 CHIPPING AWAY THE FOREST

In December 1967 the Western Australian Government invited proposals for establishing a wood chip export industry in the south-west. They proposed cutting and shipping 500,000 tons of wood chips annually from State forests (*Forests Department* 1968, p. 12). In October 1968, after considering submissions from Bunnings and the Hawker Siddeley Company, the government announced it had granted Bunnings the concession for a wood chip mill located at Diamond, near Manjimup. In June 1969, the State Government signed an agreement with the W.A. Chip and Pulp Company Limited and Bunnings Timber Holdings Limited, to establish the \$11 million industry, with Bunbury as the export harbour (*Forests Department* 1969, p.12).

There were few dissenting voices when the wood chip industry was introduced. The project produced no initial outcry from the State's environmentalists. During a period of instability and uncertainty in the south-west timber industry, wood chipping was promoted as an exciting venture that would reinvigorate the local economy and labour market. The local media described the venture as 'a much-needed shot in the arm for the Manjimup district' (*Manjimup-Warren Times* 1969). State Parliament debates over the Wood Chipping Industry Agreement Bill revealed no concerns over the environmental impact of wood chipping. An emphasis was placed on the benefits the agreement would give to the timber industry and to employment (*Parliamentary Debates* 1969).

In August 1973 the Tonkin Labor Government presented the Wood Chipping Industry Agreement Act Amendment Bill. The Bill provided the catalyst for more confrontational forms of native forests protest. As the result of a \$200 million Japanese export contract to supply wood chips, the Bill sought to raise the volume of timber cutting from 500,000 tons to 670,000 tons per annum, with a further anticipated increase to 750,000 tons. The wood chips would be supplied over a period of fifteen years, and the Environmental Protection Council and the Environmental Protection Authority had supposedly approved measures designed to protect the forest environment (WA *Parliamentary Debates* 1973). The EPA's Interim Report dated three days after the debate, however, showed that insufficient knowledge was available about the wood chip proposal for it to receive complete endorsement (EPA 1973).

Prior to the Wood Chip Amendment Bill debate in State Parliament there was growing opposition to the establishment of a wood chip industry in Western Australia and protest action was considered. The Tree Society of Western Australia called for opinions about wood chipping and its possible impact on the forests. The organisation had received several letters from people who had been refused the opportunity of voicing their opinions in the press (*Tree Society Review* 1973). A correspondent in the *Australian* newspaper deplored the 'crashing silence from conservationists and environmentalists' over the issue, and believed the real impact of wood chipping had been ignored by environmental protection authorities (*Australian* 1973). John Thomson, an ex-forester with over fifty years experience, was angry at the proposal to clear-fell the Karri and Marri forests. He and other foresters felt they should organise to protest against the impending destruction (Thomson 1973). A local forest action group in Queensland offered its support, and described the tactics members had employed during a successful anti-wood chip campaign (Ellwood 1973).

The impact of intensive forestry practices such as wood chipping was becoming a subject for public criticism and professional critique on a national scale (Routley 1973). In Western Australia an active forests protest organisation was formed in response to the implementation of the Wood Chipping Amendment Act. The Campaign to Save Native Forests (WA) (CSNF) initially comprised a small group of student activists who intended to purchase a block of land near Manjimup and became concerned about forest destruction in the area through wood chipping. After its foundation in early 1975, membership of the organisation broadened as other environmental groups pledged their support. A packed meeting in Perth Town Hall in July 1975 showed that the campaign's stance against wood chipping was gaining considerable public sympathy (Thamo 2004). While the CSNF's initial target was the wood chip industry, it later broadened its focus to lobby for a forest management orientation change away from commercial exploitation towards a greater emphasis on conservation and community benefits. This involved reversing decline in forest areas through improved reforestation, creating additional reserves and national parks, and introducing a programme of community education (CSNF 1978a).

From the outset, the CSNF recognized the need to present a cogently persuasive argument against the effects of wood chipping. This resulted in a 1975 detailed submission to the Australian Senate Standing Committee on the Social Environment. The committee had been tasked with enquiring into the wood chip industry's impact on the environment. The submission comprised a detailed analysis of anticipated threats to the forests from intensive wood chipping. It also argued that the Manjimup project had received hasty approval, without proper regard for environmental consequences. The CSNF called for the excision of the Shannon River Basin from the wood chip area, a reduction in the tonnage of export timber for wood chips, and the initiation of a Royal Commission or similar inquiry into forest management practices and the needs of present and future generations with regard to Western Australia's native forests (Adair et al. 1975).

In order to project their message to a wider audience, the group presented their arguments against the wood chip industry in an eight-page broadsheet, which was both innovative and influential, and prompted people to join the organisation (Sharp 2004). The publication communicated the salient points of the CSNF's submission to the Senate Standing Committee in an attractive format, with illustrations, photographs, maps and cartoons, and invited attendance at a public meeting in Perth Town Hall (CSNF 1975). One year later, the group produced a similar broadsheet, this time

calling for a halt to the Manjimup project and publicising a demonstration on Perth Esplanade to support proposed trade union action against wood chipping (CSNF 1976a).

While public meetings in Perth afforded an opportunity for the CSNF to argue its case and gauge levels of support, a gathering in the south-west provided an early indication of the tensions that would arise between timber workers and environmentalists. At an August 1975 meeting in Manjimup, which was convened by members of the local branch of the CSNF, the organisation faced a barrage of questions from the Institute of Foresters. Local people, who supported the wood chip industry, supported their argument. Police were called when hecklers disrupted the meeting (*West Australian* 1975).

The CSNF were aware of the need to keep the anti-wood chipping campaign in the public spotlight, and this provided the inspiration to create stunts to attract media attention. On Arbor Day, a member of the group, dressed as a tree and wearing a slogan, intruded on an official ceremony, emphasising the point that planting one tree did not compensate for the destruction of a forest. The incident was reported by Perth news media that evening (Sharp 2004). In November 1976, members of the CSNF organised a march through Perth, protesting at a State government decision to allow wood chipping in the Shannon Basin. A simulated petition was burnt outside Parliament House (*West Australian* 1976). The group also attempted to raise public awareness of forest issues by conducting tours of the south-west, during which the public were invited to compare the natural beauty of the forest with the uniform immaturity of pine plantations (CSNF 1976b).

The style of campaigning adopted by the CSNF was oriented towards attracting public and media attention, and relied on strategies such as public meetings, broadsheets, staged events, and public education to further its cause. While many environmentalists initially supported the CSNF in its campaign, there were some who believed that the expansion of wood chipping could be halted by applying a different strategy. The South-West Forests Defence Foundation (SFDF) was formed in 1975 from a group of environmentalists who were convinced that the Manjimup wood chip project could be stopped only by means of a legal challenge. Membership in the group rose steadily, and by December 1977 it stood at 1,159 (*SFDF Newsletter* 1978a).

In January 1976, the SFDF initiated its legal case against wood chipping, which relied on defining the anticipated damage to the forest environment caused by the wood chip project as an 'actionable nuisance', and thus forming the basis for two Constitutional challenges (Stein 1976). The organisation also sought and received support from other groups, including Ecology Action, Sydney, and the Environmental Law Reform Group in Tasmania (Conacher 1975; ELRG Tasmania 1975; Thompson 1975). After a two-year struggle, however, the Foundation found the Constitution argument had been ruled invalid, its application for legal aid had stalled, and its costly appeal to the High Court against a government refusal to grant the organisation incorporation had failed (*SFDF Newsletter* 1978a). The decision to refuse incorporation was seen as an example of political interference by the Court Liberal Government in order to avoid legal challenges against the wood chip industry (Bonyhady 1993 pp. 74-75, Schultz 2004).

While the use of legal action to defeat wood chipping remained a core component of SFDF strategies, the group decided to make full use of the talents of its members. Unlike the CSNF, which was aligned to the Labor Party and more overtly activist, the SFDF comprised mainly middle-class academics and professionals from Perth's western suburbs (Conacher 2004; Schultz 2004). The organisation's strong academic base was reflected in the incisive and analytical publications used to argue its cause. In February 1976, the SFDF published a comprehensive appraisal of the Manjimup wood chip project (Conacher and Schultz 1976a), and later that year the organisation submitted a detailed analysis of forest management practices, concluding that the Forests Department had failed in its role as custodian of the State's Forests (Conacher and Schultz 1976b). The May 1979 publication of the Foundation's evidence showed the Forests Department did not comply with measures designed to minimise the environmental effects of the wood chip industry (SFDF 1979). The report's publication prompted a license area visit from the Senate Standing Committee on Science and the Environment. They came to verify data in the SFDF report (*SFDF Newsletter* 1980).

By mid-1976 the Foundation's activities had expanded to include public education, political lobbying, and wood chip industry surveillance. Similarly, its objectives had broadened to calls to implement a land use plan for the south-west forests, a comprehensive review of the wood chip industry, and the reservation of mature Karri forests in secure areas (SFDF undated).

Although the CSNF and the SFDF were characterised by their adoption of different campaign strategies, they were united by the common goal of stopping the Western Australian wood chip industry expansion. Their shared objective resulted in a willingness to collaborate on certain issues, such as the 1975 submission to the Trades and Labour Council for a green ban on wood chipping (Conacher 2004). The groups appealed to different types of people, and while some would join both groups, others would only join one because they could identify with its image and methods of operation (Schultz 2004).

The wood chip issue not only provided the impetus for creating Western Australia's first organised forest protest groups, but it also provided a target for the most extreme form of direct action. Early on 19 July 1976, two environmental activists, John Chester and Michael Haabjoern, attempted to blow up the main loading gantry at the Bunbury wood chip terminal. One bomb exploded, causing damage to the conveyor system, while another device failed to ignite (*South Western Times* 1976a). Both men were subsequently convicted, and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for causing the explosion (*South-Western Times* 1976b).

Neither of the bombers appears to have been associated with any formal environmental organisation, and both seem to have acted from personal motivations. At his trial, Michael Haabjoern stated:

My concern towards the destruction of our environment was the motive for my participation in the events to which the charges relate...it was a once only venture on my part and was done in the hope of forestalling operations of the said company for a period, until the public could be made aware of the threat to our native forest and a more enlightened and moral legislation could be introduced concerning the timber industry. (Haabjoern 1976)

While the actions of the bombers produced spontaneous expressions of sympathy from some members of Western Australia's forest protest groups (Sharp 2004), both organisations disassociated themselves from the action, and the prevailing view was that the incident had been detrimental to their cause (Schultz 2004).

The campaign against the wood chip industry exerted a definitive influence on the native forests protest movement in Western Australia. People became concerned at the implications and effects of intensive wood chipping, and the reaction against it provided the stimulus for creating two groups specifically dedicated to native forests protest. While the groups were unable to halt the expansion of wood chipping, their campaigns resulted in more aggressive and innovative strategies, and, most importantly, the construction of two co-ordinated and professional organisations. The Bunbury terminal bombing demonstrated the emotive power of the wood chip debate to arouse the most violent form of activism. A further threat to the forests in the late 1970s would create the conditions for a more forceful reaction from the Western Australian protest movement.

5 THE WAGERUP OCCUPATION

In February 1978, the CSNF produced a four-page broadsheet warning of an impending threat to Western Australia's water supply. Increased salinity was caused by the Court Government's plans to allow Alcoa to expand its bauxite mining operations in the Jarrah forests. The publication advertised a public meeting in Perth Town Hall to discuss ways to prevent the expansion, and to force a review of the company's existing operations (CSNF 1978b). The CSNF's decision to broaden its campaign to bauxite mining impacts was prompted by comments made by a senior employee of the Forests Department. He believed that bauxite mining operations caused far more ecological damage to the forests than wood chipping (Sharp 2004; *West Australian* 1978a).

Legislation was introduced in the Western Australian Parliament to allow Alcoa and Alwest to open new bauxite plants at Wagerup and Worsley. Prior to this the CSNF began an intensive campaign. Circulars to group members and volunteers urged participation through a variety of activities, including lobbying members of parliament, distributing broadsheets, pasting posters, and encouraging attendance at film evenings and social functions to support the campaign and raise funds (CSNF 1978c). On the opening day of the bauxite legislation debate in State Parliament, the organisation planned a 'salt assault'. A quantity of salt was placed on the steps of Parliament House to remind parliamentarians of their responsibilities to protect the State's forests and water supplies (CSNF 1978d).

The CSNF's decision to oppose bauxite mining expansion attracted strong criticism from the State Liberal Government. The group's arguments were denounced by Premier Court as being based on distortion and slanderous accusation. He considered the organisation posed a far greater threat to the people of the south-west than mining ever would through threatening the livelihoods of workers (*West Australian* 1978b). Graeme MacKinnon, the Minister for Conservation and the Environment, thought the CSNF's salinity claims were exaggerated. He further believed the group's actions represented a desperate effort to revitalise the organisation after its anti-wood chipping campaign had stalled (*West Australian* 1978c).

The Parliamentary debate over bauxite mining expansion raised doubts over the adequacy of environmental protection procedures. H.D. Evans, the Opposition Spokesman on Agriculture, questioned the haste with which the bills had been presented, and why environmental data for the projects had been provided by the interested companies, rather than through an environmental impact statement. He observed that in the early 1960s bauxite mining was intended as a limited venture covering only 25 to 30 acres of forest annually, and that the industry had completely changed its original intention. The Opposition had canvassed the views of several environmental organisations, and believed the bauxite mining concerns expressed by the CSNF reflected the opinions of many people in the State (*WA Parliamentary Debates* 1978). Despite the reservations, however, the Alumina Refinery Agreement Bills successfully passed through Parliament.

When it became apparent that the Western Australian Government was determined to proceed with bauxite mining expansion, the CSNF realised it was necessary to adopt more aggressive strategies. In mid-1978 two Americans, sponsored by the Quakers, visited Perth to conduct a series of non-violent protest workshops, and several of the younger CSNF members attended. As a result of the workshops, a recommendation was made for the group to hold a non-violent occupation. The occupation would protest further mining extension in the Jarrah forest by building Alcoa's third alumina refinery at Wagerup (Hutchison 2004). In June 1978, the CSNF held its first training weekend at Wellington Mills, during which guidelines for non-violent civil disobedience were formulated (CSNF 1978e).

The latter half of 1978 saw a period of mounting tension between the Western Australian Government and the forest protest movement. The SFDF decided to extend its activities to include the northern Jarrah forest, and formed a special sub-committee to examine the effects of bauxite mining. In conjunction with the CSNF, the group hired the Perth Town Hall in August for a week of activities entitled 'A Forest Affair', during which photographs, displays and films promoted environmental awareness. The week's activities culminated in a "Darling Range Parade", during which various environmental groups marched with placards calling for a public enquiry into bauxite mining (*SFDF Newsletter* 1978b).

Both the CSNF and SFDF expanded their media campaign, with warnings that the State Government was ignoring the opinion of experts and jeopardising the future of Western Australians (CSNF and Friends of the Earth 1978; *West Australian* 1978d). Premier Court appealed to the public to stop the 'noisy campaign' by militant conservationists who had produced a crisis threatening the State's economy and future prosperity (*West Australian* 1978e). The growth of dissident groups became such a serious concern to the government that consideration was given to the establishment of a 'Directorate of Public Safety' to contain the rise of civil disorder (*Daily News* 1978).

During November 1978, the CSNF drew up plans for a non-violent occupation of Alcoa's proposed new alumina refinery at Wagerup. The group justified its decision to adopt tactics of civil disobedi-

ence by stating that all legal avenues of protest had been exhausted, and it had become apparent that politicians viewed the forests as expendable and, as a result, disregarded public concern. Since the campaign could not condone violence, those participating in the occupation were required to undertake non-violent civil disobedience training conducted by a specially formed 'Non-Violent Action Group' (CSNF 1978f). During four training weekends in December 1978 and January 1979, potential occupiers studied the history and philosophy of non-violent protest, group decision-making, and participated in role-playing (CSNF, 1978g). The group also viewed films of non-violent occupations at Seabrook, USA, and Why!, West Germany in order to gain some appreciation of what lay before them at Wagerup (CSNF 1978h).

On Saturday, 3 February 1979, sixteen members of the CSNF climbed past a gate into the site of Alcoa's proposed refinery at Wagerup. Thus began the first occupation of a site in Australia utilising the tactics of non-violent civil disobedience (Bonyhady 1993 pp. 42-43, *Environment WA* 1979, p.6). Immediately prior to the occupation a rally of some 300 supporters were addressed by Alan Tingay, CSNF President, John Dawkins, Labor MHR for Fremantle, and Jack Evans, State President of the Australian Democrats. A portion of the crowd comprised members of the Down to Earth Association, who had attended a conference and rally at Nanga Brook the previous weekend, and decided to support the action (*Environment WA* 1979, p.7).

During the first two days the site's occupiers remained unchallenged, as Alcoa decided to halt operations over the weekend. The protesters demanded that the project be suspended, and called for a Federal public inquiry into the bauxite industry in Western Australia. While not offering violence, the occupiers intended to disrupt operations when work resumed, either by obstructing roads, machinery, or fuel supplies (*Sunday Times* 1979; *West Australian* 1979).

The Wagerup occupation was not only remarkable for establishing a benchmark for non-violent protest in Western Australia, but also for the media exploitation. The CSNF's media spokesperson at the time, Neil Bartholomaeus, recalled that the occupation attracted considerable attention, as that particular protest method had not been done before. He said one of the group's main objectives was to attract as much publicity as possible by using the media effectively. In order to achieve this aim, Bartholomaeus organised media workshops prior to Wagerup as part of the group's overall campaign strategy (Bartholomaeus 2004).

During the afternoon of 5 February 1979, twelve protesters were arrested by police and later charged with obstructing a lawful activity under Section 67 of the Police Act. The charges were subsequently dismissed after it was established that, while Alcoa had been given verbal approval to commence operations at the site, the company had not received written authorisation from the State Government. A further CSNF protest at Wagerup in May 1979 resulted in a further 23 arrests. Convictions were eventually quashed because the Crown failed to demonstrate that Alcoa was acting under a State licence (Bonyhady 1993 pp. 42-45). The failure to successfully prosecute any of the Wagerup occupiers prompted new legislation to protect development projects from future protests. Under the Government Agreements Act, 1979, people who hindered or obstructed activities being carried out under agreement with the Western Australian Government would be liable to a \$5,000 fine or twelve months' imprisonment (*Government Agreements Act* 1979).

6 CONCLUSIONS

The occupation of Alcoa's Wagerup refinery site represented the final stage in the transformation of Western Australia's native forests protest movement in the 1970s. Increased threats to the State's forests from industrial exploitation during the decade's early years combined with an emerging sense of radicalism resulted in a more assertive public reaction against forest depletion. The introduction of an intensive wood chip industry into Western Australia then provided the impetus for the organisation of two forest protest groups, and produced an expansion and intensification of forest activism. It was the Wagerup occupation that completed the transition of native forests protest from conventional forms of passive dissent to more explicit strategies of non-violent direct action.

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