



Roger Green 30 Dec 1955 - 4 Dec 2024 OBITUARY

By Elizabeth “Lizzie” O’Brien, Lead Scientist and Lead Advisor, The LEAD Group Inc. Australia, 30 December 2024

Roger Green would have turned 69 today, but in the words of Haydn Washington, he was a greenie who was slowly felled by a red gum. Roger always called me “Lizzie”. He was my friend for 53 years, and my boyfriend in 1972 in 5th form at Chatswood High School on Sydney’s North Shore.

Roger Green acquired meningoencephalitis from fungal spores released when he chain-sawed, by order of the local Council, a *Eucalyptus baileyi* (red gum) on his property just outside Canberra in 2002.

Before that, Roger had run a very successful editing and printing business called Green Words and, as I found out after the last time I saw him at the end of November 2024, five days before he died, Roger Green had written three books, two of which were published: “Battle for the Franklin” in 1984 and “Good Business, Bad Business” in 2002.

I was amazed to discover when last week I started to read his “Battle for the Franklin”, that the whole dam-building tradition and culture in Tasmania was “justified” according to the Hydro-Electric Commission, on the basis that the energy was needed for mining and forestry. That tradition, of government’s automatically approving any and all proposals which destroy the environment for the sake of felling trees and mining the earth, no matter the energy costs (and contribution to the climate crisis), continues to this day.

I’m certain that if Roger had been able to use a computer in the final month of his life, he would have signed my *Circular Economy for Lead* Petition to the Australian Federal Government (see above), which closed for signatures the day Roger died, 4th December 2024.

Indeed, if he’d been able to talk on the phone and use a computer for the last two decades of his life, I feel certain I could have learned so much



more from him about how to run a truly successful environmental protection campaign. Earlier visits to Canberra involved an outing for Roger when he was still able to be transferred from wheelchair to car, but later, had to be held indoors using a hearing device.



Photo: Lizzie, Roger and Michael Maratea at Arboretum, and Lizzie, Roger and Howard Jacobs at Roger's aged care, Canberra visits

I will be forever grateful to have known Roger, and that his legacy – compassion, love of beauty, brilliance - lives on in his beautiful wife Monika and sons Ned and Will.

Photo: Monika Binder and Roger Green



In the last issue – [LEAD Action News vol 22 no 3](#) – I included a hastily put-together obituary of another member of Roger's friendship group from three of his schools, Lembit Salasoo, so I'm adding in here some photos of Lembit that have been found since. This one was taken a month before Lembit had to retire sick from General Electric, USA. *Photo: (L to R) Philip Wallis, Lembit Salasoo & Peter Beaumont-Edmonds Nov 2023 Sydney*

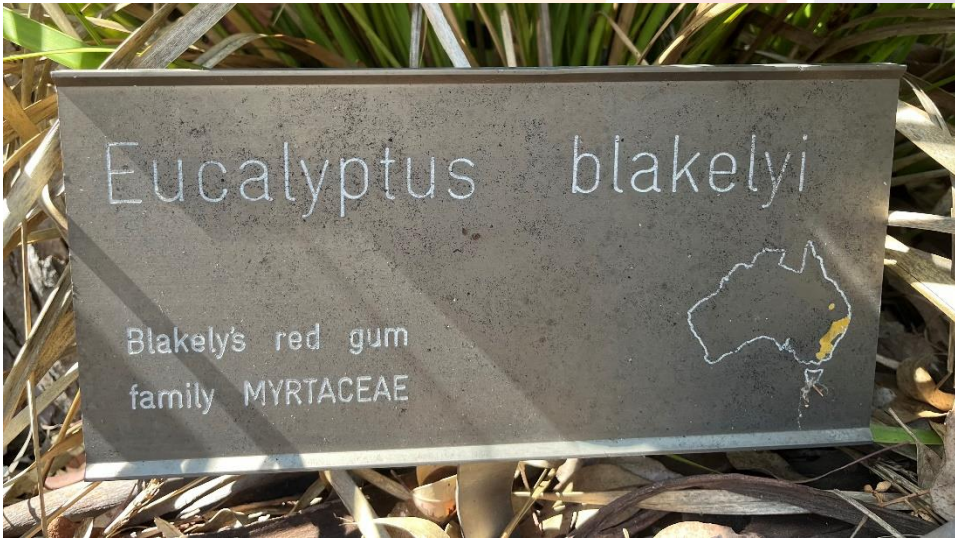
As an environmental health professional, I feel compelled to add here a note on the potential for prevention of Roger's fatal illness...



Botanical Gardens, gardening shows like *Gardening Australia* on ABC TV, and government agencies, especially OHS and Councils, in all the areas in Australia where red gums grow, need to be warning people not to allow sawdust from red gums or other Cryptococcus-affected gums to alight on their skin. When creating sawdust during trimming or cutting down fungus-bearing gums, people should be wearing a headshield and be fully covered by overalls, socks, boots, gloves, in order to stop the fungal spores from for example *Eucalyptus baileyi* sawdust entering tiny cuts in the skin and eventually making their way to the brain (which took two years to become evident in Roger's case).

Photo: Lizzie beside trimmed Eucalyptus baileyi at Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) carpark Canberra

According to “The wood-chopping farmer with an axe to grind on fungus” by Cherie von Hörchner, 9 Jun 2017, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2017-06-09/wood-chop-warning-for-fungus-from-eucalyptus-causing-disease/8599890> :



[Roger and the farmer of this article] contracted Cryptococcus, a disease that kills half a million people globally each year and, in Australia, tends to come from the Cryptococcus gattii fungus that grows in and around eucalyptus trees.

Photo: ANBG Blakely's red gum plaque showing south eastern Australian distribution

...James Fraser, a molecular biologist from the University of Queensland [said, "...the far more common second fatal form of Cryptococcus,] Cryptococcus neoformans is responsible for half a million deaths a year, predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa and less privileged countries ... these tend to target people who are immunocompromised."

Below you will find "In memory of Roger Green" by fellow Franklin-campaigner Vince Mahon, and then Roger's very philosophical Introduction to his book about the successful "Battle for the Franklin", but first I've included here a page about what is beauty? from Roger's unpublished book on philosophy, written for his children and titled: "The Bad Life — Beauty 1, Fear 0"; and I've added photos to the Classmates Eulogy some of us wrote and read at his funeral.



what-is-beauty?¶

- ¶
- Beauty-itself-doth-of-itself-persuade¶*
- The-eyes-of-men-without-an-orator-¶*
- (William-Shakespeare,-The-rape-of-Lucrece,-1594)¶
- ¶
- [cd-The-following-list-is-what-beauty-meant-to-Roger]¶
- ¶
- nature¶
 - an-ancient-tree¶
 - spring-blossom¶
 - the-leap-of-a-whale¶
 - the-full-moon-rising¶
 - the-sea-shore¶
 - a-storm-in-the-mountains¶
 - the-antarctic-wilderness¶
 - the-Milky-Way¶
 - the-smell-of-jasmine/gardenia¶
 - air,-after-nearly-drowning¶
- art¶
 - a-hand's-outline-on-a-cave-wall¶
 - the-Venus-de-Milo¶
 - the-Book-of-Kells¶
 - da-Vinci's-Mona-Lisa-(la-Giaconda)¶
 - Michaelangelo's-David¶
 - Hokusai's-Great-Wave¶
 - Cezanne's-Mont-St-Victoire¶
 - Kandinsky's-improvisations-[no.-9,-1910]¶
 - Ansel-Adams'photographs-of-Yosemite-cliffs¶
 - Kurosawa's-Seven-Samurai¶
 - oriental-calligraphy¶
- music¶
 - Beethoven's-moonlight-sonata¶
 - Bach's-mass-in-B-minor¶
 - the-Beatles'-white-album¶
 - shakuhachi¶
- literature¶
 - Chaucer's-Canterbury-tales¶
 - Dante's-Inferno¶
 - Shakespeare's-King-Lear¶
 - Coleridge's-Kubla-Khan¶
 - Dylan-Thomas,-The-force-that-through-the-green-fuse-drives-the-flower¶
 - the-Oxford-English-dictionary¶
 - Spike-Milligan's-Goon-show-scripts¶
- religion¶
 - Aboriginal-creation-myths¶
 - the-first-chapter-of-the-book-of-Genesis-(old-testament,-Christian-bible)¶
 - the-Tao-te-ching¶
 - the-book-of-Matthew-(new-testament)¶
 - Tibetan-monks-meditating-in-saffron-robos¶
- architecture¶
 - the-pyramids-of-Egypt¶
 - the-Parthenon¶
 - Roman-aqueducts¶
 - the-Alhambra-palace¶
 - Chartres-cathedral¶
 - a-Shinto-shrine¶
 - the-Sydney-Opera-House¶
 - a-red-cedar-chest-of-drawers¶
- mathematics¶
 - pi¶
 - Pythagoras'-theorem¶
 - the-geometry-of-Euclid¶
 - calculus-(Newton-and-Leibniz)¶
 - trigonometry¶
- science¶
 - Kepler's-equations-for-the-orbits-of-the-planets¶
 - Newton's-laws-of-motion¶
 - natural-selection-(Darwin-and-Wallace)¶
 - Einstein's-theory-of-special-relativity¶
 - the-Rutherford-Bohr-model-of-the-atom¶
 - Heisenberg's-uncertainty-principle¶
 - the-double-helix-of-DNA-(deoxyribonucleic-acid)¶
 - the-biochemistry-of-photosynthesis¶
 - the-Krebs-acid-cycle¶

- the-periodic-table-of-the-elements¶
- plate-tectonics¶
- technology¶
 - the-wheel¶
 - radio¶
 - the-jet-engine¶
 - the-washing-machine¶
 - the-telephone¶
 - the-programmable-computer¶
 - the-transistor¶
- medicine¶
 - the-smallpox-vaccine¶
 - anaesthesia¶
 - x-ray-images¶
 - penicillin¶
- food-and-drink¶
 - stream-water,-after-thirst¶
 - fresh-baked-bread¶
 - figs-hanging-over-the-fence¶
 - milk¶
 - honey¶
 - minestrone¶
 - rare-lamb¶
 - good-wine¶
- touch-and-movement¶
 - a-foot-massage¶
 - orgasm¶
 - skiing¶
 - a-warm-bath¶
- human-actions¶
 - someone-else-cooking-dinner¶
 - patience¶
 - politeness¶
 - caring-for-the-sick¶
 - nursing-a-child¶
 - being-kind-when-no-one-is-watching¶
 - passing-the-ball-to-a-team-mate-in-a-space¶
- states-of-mind¶
 - the-calm-and-clarity-of-meditation¶
 - perceiving-infinity¶
 - sleep¶
- people¶
 - (for-a-baby)-your-parent's-face¶
 - (for-a-parent)-your-baby's-first-smile¶
 - a-hug-from-someone-you-love¶
 - Helen-of-Troy¶
 - Brad-Pitt¶
 - the-Dalai-Lama¶

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(extracted-from-Green-R-2015,-*The-Bad-Life--Beauty-1,-Fear-0,-* Canberra,-unpublished-manuscript).-¶

Eulogy by Roger Green's Classmates



Photo by Lizzie's mum Noela Whitton: L to R: Michael Maratea, Howard Jacobs, Lizzie O'Brien, Roger Green, Barbara Drury and Lembit Salasoo, Sydney University days 1975.

[Words of Howard Jacobs, read by Lizzie O'Brien]: We were part of a close group of childhood friends at school and university, and even though life took us in different directions many of us remained close to Roger for 50 years or more.

I'm not here just to speak on my own behalf but on behalf of several of Roger's school and university friends, and those who could not be here: Howard Jacobs, Philip Wallis and Geraldine Brooks.

Roger attended two primary schools, two high schools and two universities. That much we all agree on, but it all happened so long ago that when a few of us got together recently to discuss what we would say, it became clear that memory is a very tricky thing.

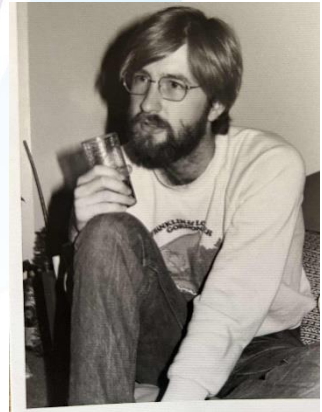


One thing we did all agree on was Roger's striking appearance. Always handsome, tall and of course, the hair. I loved the way it swished from side to side when he was running on the soccer field!

Photo: Roger's 4th Form school dance date Joanne Young

In his early adult years, we see someone who would not have been out of place in a Jean-Luc Goddard movie, especially during his shorter hair/wire-rimmed glasses days.

Photo: Roger in his Franklin and Gordon Rivers, Tasmanian Wilderness Society sweatshirt, early 1980s Jean-Luc Goddard movie look



Roger was intelligent, serious, funny, romantic, contemplative, curious, intellectual, witty, someone with a rich inner life – a Renaissance man growing up on Sydney's conservative, middle-class North Shore. Like many of us, he escaped as soon as possible, first to the progressive International School and then to University and the inner-city.

Roger's interests from that time were eclectic: Monty Python songs, Shakespeare, Kurosawa, Kandinsky, philosophy, soccer, religions (the idea not the practice), bushwalking, and the opposite sex!!

To pin Roger down is not easy, as you can see, but we would like to share some memories that show some of the many sides of our friend.

[Read by Michael Maratea]: Good morning. Roger was my friend. We knew each other since we were five at Lindfield Public School. He meant a lot to me. He was thoughtful, and the world fascinated him. Roger saw the connection between opposites and was always trying to reconcile them. There was never too little to know or too much to understand. He had a huge appetite for knowledge.



At Chatswood High, we had a wonderful English teacher called Mr Gordon. He loved Shakespeare. We weren't as keen, and of course we'd always be complaining saying, 'Gosh, this is boring' and Mr Gordon's beautiful reply was, 'only boring people get bored'. Well Roger definitely wasn't bored! He absorbed as much information as was humanly possible. I think he could have been the world's first computer, storing everything away in his memory, putting it into files, in alphabetical order, waiting for the day he could retrieve in and use it.

Photo: Roger Green and Michael Maratea

Fundamentally I believe that Roger didn't see knowledge as power, as is often quoted, but he saw knowledge as beauty. And that quest to find beauty led him down a different path. By the end of Year 11 [5th Form], Roger needed to spread his wings and leave the nest of the state school system and he found just what he wanted at the International School, which had opened just a few years earlier. I think that school changed his life forever. It was the path less travelled and he was happy. And for the rest of his life, Roger would continue to challenge himself. At that school his love of nature and the environment began to blossom. He met like-minded people, such as Hayden Washington, who would become a well-known environmentalist and author. They together and with others such as Roger Faulkner, would form the Colo Committee. The campaigning work done by these young men, still at school, was instrumental in having the Wollemi National Park declared in the 1980s by the Wran Labor government.



Roger's love of nature and the environment and his deeply-rooted sense of justice led him to come to Canberra to help organise and fight for the preservation of the Franklin River, one of the most important environmental battles ever fought in Australia. And that led Roger to the beautiful Monika and his loving boys Ned and Billy. I am so grateful that you have been a part of my life.

Roger



Photo: Monika and Roger

I miss you Roger.

[Read by Lizzie O'Brien] And from Philip Wallis: Although I first met Roger at Lindfield Public School, most of my memories of Roger go back to when I met him at Artarmon Public School in the Opportunity Class and we had notable musicians Lembit Salasoo - who became a brilliant electrical engineer (but passed away in August this year) – and Geoffrey Collins who began his illustrious music career playing the flute in the school band.



Photo: Lizzie with Lembit's family



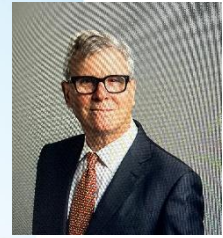
Roger beat me to the position of Band Leader and I was offered the job of flautist but having no musical talent, that was the end of my musical journey.

Photo: classmate Geoff Collins, flautist, 2015



Also at the same school was Anthony Spencer who, now, like me, is also a barrister, and Jeff Lewis who became a music entrepreneur, as well as Howard Jacobs who was the star of the dramatic society which Roger and I belonged to too. Roger often played the leading man because he was so tall. Roger and I [that's Philip Wallis] played soccer together for Lindfield Soccer Club where he was a striker.

Photo: classmate Anthony Spencer



I often went to the Green's house where I found his father had the weird job of being an agronomist for the Department of Agriculture. Roger's little brother Warwick was in the same class as my little brother Mark. My later memory of Roger was that Roger's girlfriend Jane Carrick [who is here today] was part of the reason that he studied Medicine at the University of NSW before he transferred to Sydney University to study Arts.

At the Chatswood High School 10-year reunion, we were all impressed that Roger was writing his first book: "Battle for the Franklin". And I'm so glad Lizzie and I saw Warwick again and of course Roger on his last trip to Sydney at their mother's funeral.



Lizzie O'Brien (that's me!): after spending a year at Willoughby Girls School in 4th Form, it was wonderful to arrive at Chatswood High School in Roger's last year there in 5th Form, and to immediately be accepted by the friendship group of Philip Wallis, Roger Green, Howard Jacobs, Michael Maratea, Lembit Salasoo and Jeff Lewis. I studied English, Maths and Science in Roger's classes.



Photo: Chatswood High 5th Form English 5E1: (2nd row 2nd from L) Philip Wallis, Roger Green, Howard Jacobs, (behind them) Michael Maratea, Lembit Salasoo, Jeff Lewis, (behind Jeff) Lizzie O'Brien

And we were all on the Punari (school magazine) Committee 1973 together.

In 1971 Punari recorded Lembit Salasoo as Dux of third form and first in Science and English whereas Roger came first in Maths and German, which was pretty impressive considering that in 1972, Lembit topped the state in the School Certificate exams.

Overleaf are some 4th Form Punari contributions from Roger and Lembit.

Punari Committee



TOP: R. Forrester, J. Lewis, P. Wallis, M. Maratea, M. Marx. SECOND ROW: L. Kornman, R. Green, H. Jacobs, E. O'Brien, C. Gingle. THIRD ROW: J. Moore, D. Settle, M. Watts, A. Jones.



MINORITIES ARE ALMOST ALWAYS IN THE RIGHT

What logic is there in this statement? Who is to say what is right? There is always a difference of opinion. Few arguments can be actually proven right or wrong. The individual makes up his own mind (although possibly with outside help).

That is not to say that majorities are always right either. There are, of course, some minority groups that I agree with. One topical example is that I am opposed to American imperialism. This view is right (in my mind) but not merely so because I am part of a minority.

It can, of course, be argued that a minority group could be right because it is apart from the masses. This shows that they may possibly have delved more deeply into the subject than the general populace. This shows that minorities are often thinking parts of the community. But it does not make them right. The "Stop the Tours" campaign is a thinking minority but they are dead wrong.

Even if a minority has proven its arguments and morally justified its claims it still may not be right. The democratic system puts an end to that. Democracy says that the majority decision is the right one. So even on some totally ridiculous argument (for example, the numbers relationship between the House of Representatives and Senate) from some quarters the majority comes out "right."

Democracy is sometimes a stumbling block for thinking minorities when they cannot band together and show people the right way. Unknown to the majority, they can be permitting some dreadful wrong. But then it is right, isn't it?

— Roger Green, 4S1.

FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE

The sun was yet to rise, but already the eastern sky was lightening. A cold grey light was filtering in through the distant snow-capped mountains, already reddening in anticipation of the sun. Behind me I could hear the ocean lapping on the shore, and to my left, advancing tongues of fog, the Humboldt Current's gift to this parched land, were already beginning to enter the depression through its northern door.

The sun rose, unmasking the stealthy advance by mist to my right. Tinged orange by the sunlight, it formed long fingers which scouted ahead, forging ahead and then, their tour of duty over, returning to the main bank to relate their impressions. Small breezes blew down from the mountains and carved the mist into smaller pools, which, infected by the contagious wanderlust of the breeze, flowed over the ground like shapeless amoebas. Bits would take to the air, and like comets with long tails sail far, still finally to fall back, all energy spent in a brief burst of glory. The two advancing fronts met in front of me; undaunted they flowed through each other, forming small whirlpools and rearing up to form peaks, and separating to form valleys. Soon the whole basin was filled with fog, glowing yellow in the sunlight.

I saw them — black fluid figures, like ink dropping into water, leaving trails. Having reached the ground, they united, forming a dull viscous pool. They seemed to have cloaks of darkness, leaving twilight behind them wherever they moved.

I was fairly sure; but when a black finger casually advanced skyward and extinguished the sun, I had all my doubts quenched.

It was Them.

— Lembit Salasoo, 4E1.

My first date with Roger was to see *Hamlet* on the stage, and I was dazzled by his knowledge of the play and the playwright. He encouraged me to write poetry - I will always cherish him for that.

COMMONWEALTH SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIPS

GREEN, Roger
JACOBS, Howard
JONES, Amanda
KORNMAN, Louise
LEEDS, Phillip
LEWIS, Jeffrey

MOORE, Jennifer
O'BRIEN, Elizabeth
PRENTICE, Lynda
ROBEY, Kathryn
ROLPH, Susan
SALASOO, Lembit

SEARGENT, Jan
SETTLE, Denise
SPENCER, Anthony
WALLIS

At the end of Form 5, Roger, Howard, Jeff, Lizzie, Lembit Anthony, Philip et al were awarded Commonwealth Secondary Scholarships.

I'm chuffed to think that I may have inspired Roger to love the art of Kandinsky, as I had done for many years, and I thank Roger's big sister Katie for opening my eyes to the beauty of plants which led me to major in Botany. At Sydney University, Roger encouraged me to spice up my science degree by adding Philosophy, Fine Arts and the subject we both loved the most: History and Philosophy of Science.

Photo: Siblings Katie and Roger





I'm sure Roger played no small part in my post-school interest in nature photography. Every time I walk outside I see beautiful things and photograph them and think of Roger. I now have tens of thousands of photos that will remind me of him forever.

Photo: Lizzie in her Franklin and Gordon Rivers, Tasmanian Wilderness Society t-shirt, early 1980s, with Roger in



Lumberjack mode, one of his favourite Monty Python songs. *Photo: South West Tasmanian cycad - photo by Lizzie O'Brien, Dec 1981*



He also introduced me to his Sydney University 2nd year girlfriend Barbara Drury and I thank him for the 40+ years that Barbara and I have been friends. And of course, without Roger, none of us would have been blessed to know Monika and to a small extent, to know of Will and Ned's achievements.

Photo: Barbara Drury & Lizzie O'Brien

[Read by Barbara Drury]: I'm another of Roger's many girlfriends and it's a testament to Roger that we're all here today, so that's fantastic. I met Roger through the Sydney Uni Filmmakers Society – and like any bunch of young intellectuals we talked and argued a lot but we did little actual filmmaking. Roger and I started going out together towards the end of second year in 1976, just before I headed to the US to visit my mother for the summer break. And for two months we wrote very long letters full of longing. He was endlessly inventive, thoughtful and romantic. I still have two pressed roses Roger sent me, that I secreted between pages of the I Ching, that I occasionally come across in my bookshelf, faded and intact, and a memory of time and place.

In some ways I have Roger to thank for getting a journalism cadetship at Fairfax straight out of Uni. I was obsessed with live theatre at the time, so Roger marched me into the *Union Recorder* student newspaper office and demanded review tickets. So for a while there I saw almost every play showing in Sydney and wrote reviews, which helped me get my start in journalism.

After Uni, Roger travelled around Europe on a gap year while I stayed in Sydney to start work, and our paths diverged.



And that's where I met Geraldine Brooks, who was in my cadet intake, and she and Roger reconnected after first meeting in the Fine Arts department at Sydney Uni. They shared a love of the Australian wilderness and the drive to protect it through the environment movement.

Geraldine's overseas and can't be here today, but she's watching the live stream. Here's a snippet of a message that she sent to Monika... I'll have to collect myself for this really.

'Roger was beautiful in body and soul and the Earth was lucky to have him as her champion.'

Once Roger married Monika and moved to Canberra, started his business and a family, we saw less of each other as we all pursued our various careers, formed relationships, had children and moved away, but I think it's true to say that we all had Roger in our minds and hearts.

[Words of Howard Jacobs] Three of us, Howard, Michael and Lizzie, were able to see him just a few weeks ago. Even though his health had declined and he couldn't talk, he knew that we were there - a friendship that lasted a lifetime. We were privileged to have him in our lives and will remember him fondly as one-of-a-kind, a seeker of beauty in all its forms who was prepared to take the path less travelled.

Editor's note: At Roger Green's wake, people were pleased that they had been asked, instead of buying flowers, to donate to the Bob Brown Foundation at <https://give.bobbrown.org.au/> and I was glad to report that I had made the same appeal in [Quotable Quotes - The Giants doco re Bob Brown](#), in *LEAD Action News vol 22 no 2*, which included Bob Brown saying:

"As soon as I left the Senate, I set up the Bob Brown Foundation to take action for the Tarkine. For Australia's forests. For its oceans. The Tarkine is the biggest temperate rainforest in Australia, which has been marauded and targeted by both loggers and by mining enterprise."

