



## **GAGGED: The Gunns 20 and other law suits** by Greg Ogle

### **The Book**

In December 2004, forestry giant Gunns Ltd sued Bob Brown, The Wilderness Society and eighteen other environmentalists as a result of the campaign to protect Tasmania's forests. During the next five years, Gunns suffered a series of legal losses and capitulated against many of the defendants, paying them over \$1m in costs. It was left with an expensive rump of a case against a handful of defendants.

This is the inside story of the defence of the Gunns 20 case, and of a number of other similar, but no less dangerous, law suits.

In a personal account of more than a decade defending so-called "SLAPP suits" over the Hindmarsh Island bridge, battery hens and the Tasmanian forests, "bush lawyer" Greg Ogle tells the history of the cases and their impact on the defendants and the community. This passionate portrayal illustrates the effect of such litigation on free speech and political protest, and makes an eloquent call for law reform to ensure that these incursions on civil liberties never happen again.

### **Launches**

Launches and book signings are planned from 7 -14 December 2009 in Hobart, Launceston, Adelaide and Melbourne. The trial for the remaining defendants in the Gunns 20 defendants is set for February 2010.

### **The author**

Greg Ogle was the Legal Coordinator for The Wilderness Society (TWS) and was responsible for coordinating their response to the Gunns 20 case. Prior to that, he was the South Australian campaign manager for The Wilderness Society.

Greg is not a lawyer, but first became involved in litigation in the late 1990s when a range of environmentalists and others were sued for defamation in 15 cases over the proposed bridge to Hindmarsh Island. He was part of the Conservation Council of South Australia's defence team in the major Hindmarsh Island defamation case, and was a founder and Public Officer of the Kumarangk Legal Defence Fund, an organisation established to assist the defendants in the other cases. Based on that experience, he represented Animal Liberation SA in court for 5 years when they were sued over a raid on a battery hen farm.

Greg lives in Adelaide, has a PhD in political economy and has published a number of articles on SLAPP suits (Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation). Through these articles, submissions to government and public campaigning, he has been a leader in calling for law reform in this area.

## Comments on **GAGGED**

*"This is a compelling story of big corporations, pompous lawyers, stuffy judges and brave individuals that is told in an engaging and entertaining way. In relating the sometimes enraging, sometimes hilarious twists and turns of the legal cases, Ogle candidly reveals the impacts on his own personal life and political philosophy. This is a great contribution to public debate in Australia and an empowering read for anyone campaigning for the environment or human rights."*

Geoff Law, adventurer, conservationist, defendant.

*"I spent over 4 years being sued by Gunns, but reading this book was the first time I really knew what had happened in a court case often too complicated for even the defendants to understand. There is a dry wit in this easily digestible tale which successfully marries the details of the legal cases with the broader perspective of Australians' right to freedom of speech."*

Heidi Douglas, film maker, defendant.

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