

Not for publication

**To: The Editor
The Monthly**

Date: November 24, 2020

Re: Coupe de Grace inaccuracies and false statements

Dear Editor

I draw your attention to the "essay" *Coupe de Grace* authored by Paddy Manning and published in *The Monthly* recently which fails to meet the normal expectation that investigative journalism abides by standards of impartiality, equitable balance, and proper context.

We are concerned by the sheer volume of misleading information, omission of fact and outright falsehood delivered with sneering contempt for the timber industry and the people who work in it.

We take particular issue with the author's portrayal of people and organisations who present an opposing view to the anti-forestry lobby. Of our association he writes "FWCA is active on Facebook sharing ... pro-gun and pro-Trump memes".

Forest & Wood Communities Australia does not oppose lawful firearms use and is apolitical, but we have not ever posted "pro-gun" or "pro-Trump" memes on our Facebook page so we can only construe this as an attempt to discredit our association. This is further evidenced in the author's descriptor "astroturf-marketing organisation".

The author also attempts to draw into question one of our directors and the company he works for, effectively labelling him a gun-running conspiracy theorist, apparently for no other reason than to negatively affect the reader's opinion of him.

Later he takes a cheap shot at Australian Forest Products Association CEO Ross Hampton by linking him to the "Children Overboard affair of 2001". Of what relevance is that to the essay other than to again discredit someone who defends the industry against the author's anti-forestry sources which he incredulously paints as victims.

The imputations of concern are that the above statements are purely designed to cause reputational damage and influence the reader to distrust an industry seemingly in line with the agenda of those who profit from attacking it.

Given these issues, and the myriad inaccuracies contained throughout the article as detailed in the attached document, we believe it should be removed from your website in its entirety as it does not meet Australian Press Council standards, let alone your own credo of "Nothing without context".

At the very least we ask for the above statements to be removed from the online story and an apology in writing made to Forest & Wood Communities Australia.

We note *The Monthly's* claim to be "one of Australia's boldest voices, providing enlightening commentary and vigorous, at times controversial, debate". Yet *Coupe de Grace* is just another lazy, predictable, unimaginative, agenda-driven attack on forestry.

The limp response to the story on social media indicates that most thinking people know the timber industry has no sinister secrets. Cut down trees, regrow them, make natural wood and fibre products, employ people, support regional Australia, and reduce reliance on plastic and timber sourced from countries where there are genuine environmental concerns.

If you really want to be bold, enlightening and controversial, try investigating corporate activism and its finance model based on peddling outrage.

I await your response.

Justin Law
Managing Director
Forest & Wood Communities Australia