

Defending Cherry Tree State Forest

by S Sorrensen

In a cold wind before dawn, about 15 protesters gather at the forest’s entrance. They prepare to keep the forestry machines out of Cherry Tree State Forest, an important ecosystem on the Richmond Range, near Mallanganee.

One of them scales a tripod erected across one access; two others lock on, arms inside a 40-gallon barrel of concrete, blocking the other access.

“We didn’t know what time the foresters would start work. We knew foresters started really early, so we were ready at dawn,” says Malveena Martyn, 69, who, with Naomi Shine, had her arm chained deep in the concrete. She is a member of Fridays4Forests and was supporting this forest defence organised by NSW Forest Defence.

The foresters and their machines arrive around 7am. (Not so early.) They can’t get in because both roads are blocked. They call the police.



Malveena Martyn and Naomi Shine locked on
Photo: Kudra Falla-Ricketts

The police officers go through the process. They tell protesters who do not want to be arrested to leave. All but the three leave: two are not unchaining; one is not coming down. They call Police Rescue.

Police Rescue arrives. The tripod is dismantled and tripodist Ian Gaillard is taken away. The two women are

given ear and eye protection, covered with a blanket, and the concrete sawing starts. It takes time, but that’s what this is all about: taking time. The vibe is not aggressive.

Once the machinery is entering the forest via where the tripod once stood defiantly, Malveena and Naomi release themselves

from the barrel and are arrested. Their personal possessions are taken, and they’re then bundled into a paddy wagon by two new officers. The officers drive them out from the forest. It’s a rough road.

“Right from the start these two seemed angry,” Malveena says. “Then they were going

too fast. And there’s nothing at all to hold onto in a paddy wagon. Nothing. You just have to brace yourself. We were lurching from side to side. It was like a washing machine.

“Then they (the police driving) hit a pot-hole. Naomi and I were thrown into the air. I landed on my back and immediately

knew something was wrong. I was in excruciating pain. Naomi suffered too. We were screaming out, but the police mustn’t have heard us. They didn’t stop.”

It is another 30 minutes swinging down the curves of Richmond Range before they get to the Casino police station.

When the two officers open the door, Malveena tells them she needs help to walk; she is in pain. They tell her that Naomi can help her. Naomi is also knocked about by the ride, but she helps Malveena to her cell.

Malveena says she asked the attending police officer for water and pain relief. Neither was forthcoming. Later, when the duty officer appeared, he organised paramedics to take Malveena to hospital where x-rays revealed a fracture to the L2 vertebra.

Malveena went home that night. She’s recovering and waiting to go to court.

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