

Dissent grows in ALP over Otways

By **CLAIRE MILLER**
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Opposition in ALP ranks to the State Government's forest management is hardening, with members of a suburban branch voting this week to end clearfelling in the Otways and appealing to Premier Steve Bracks to show leadership.

The non-factional ALP Otways Ranges Interest Group sent the April 17 motion passed by the Kilsyth-Mooroolbark branch to Mr Bracks, saying the party needed to resolve the matter and "we need your leadership".

In its presentation to the branch, the group said the ALP won the federal Ryan byelection on Green preferences after promising to end land clearing, while Labor won office in Western Australia promising to end logging in old-growth forests. It said the federal election and the fate of the Labor government at the next state election could also be determined by green votes.

"Still, the Minister for Environment and Conservation, Sherryl Garbutt, persists with clearfell logging, clearfelling areas around waterfalls, clearfelling catchments, clearfelling old-growth forest stands and mixed-species rainforests, and clearfelling potential environmental votes."

About 50 branches have invited the group to speak at meetings, despite an appeal by Ms Garbutt last month for branches to deal with forestry issues through the party's policy committees.

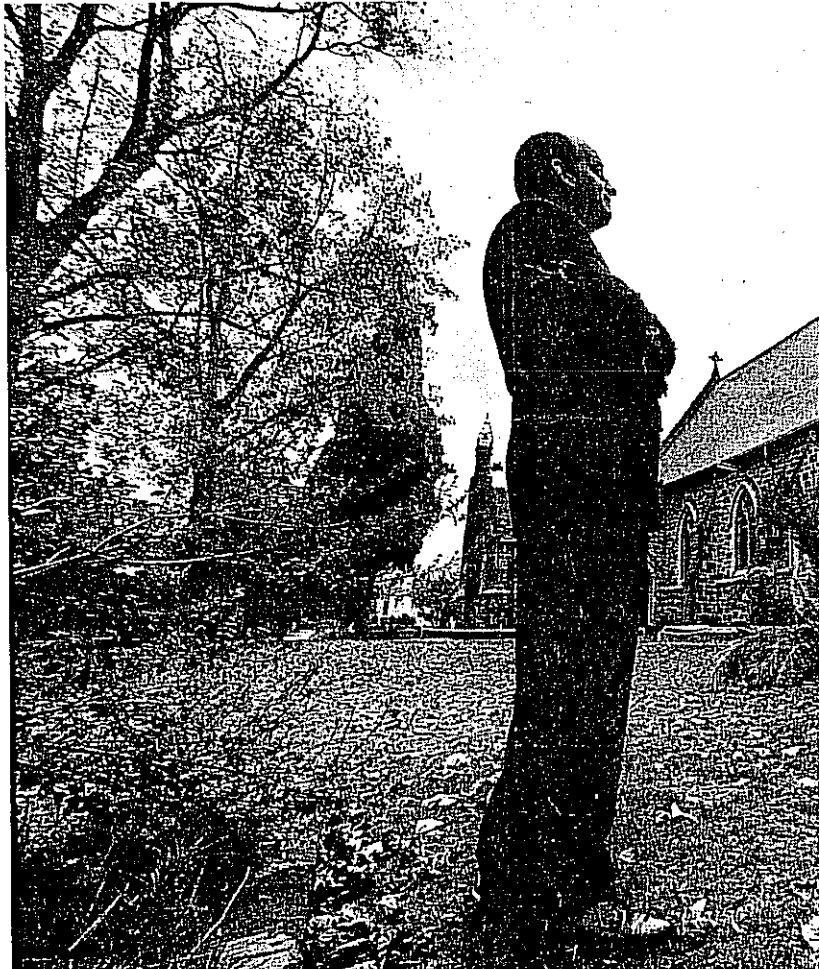
The closing of ranks against Ms Garbutt came as the second week of a forest blockade near Lavers Hill in the Otways closed with no further arrests.

About 10 protesters are on platforms strung on cables between the trees to prevent their felling in the contentious Ciancio block, which borders endangered rainforest. Supporters are camped below them.

Logging crews were sent to Ciancio two weeks ago after Ms Garbutt denied she had agreed at meetings last year not to log contentious blocks in return for no blockading in other parts of the forest.

Members of the ALP Otway Ranges Interest Group have appealed to ALP branches, policy committees, MPs and factions to support a motion to the party's October state conference to end clearfelling in the Otways.

After 150 years, St John's Catholic Church



Blessed be this building: Father Anthony Girolami in front of his

By **CAROLYN WEBB**

Catholics of Melbourne will quake. St John's Catholic Church, in Heidelberg, is 150 years old, and it has never been consecrated.

Tonight, Archbishop George Pell will belatedly rectify the situation, when he solemnly dedicates the picturesque bluestone building as a holy place.

Parish Priest Father Anthony Girolami estimates that about 25,000 baptisms, weddings and funerals have been performed at St John's.

Heidelberg parish, set aside as an outpost of Port Phillip district in 1851, is the fourth-oldest parish in Victoria. More than 80 nuptials are held there each year.

So the question must be asked. Does St John's spiritual condition make the subjects of all these ceremonies heathens? A bemused Father Girolami dismisses such concerns.

"All those ceremonies were certainly recognised in the eyes of the church," Father Girolami says. "By their very nature, they are a moment of grace. Whether a church is consecrated or not doesn't

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impact on the validity of these sacramental celebrations."

Father Girolami compares St John's plight to a university graduate missing his graduation ceremony. "The ceremony (in this case, the consecration) is basically a public acknowledgement of your achievement. It doesn't mean that you haven't gained the results to give you your degree."

Consecration is about the church formally setting aside a building exclusively as the Lord's house, a place of sacrifice, worship, praise and prayer. In modern times, consecrations are rare, because they are usually carried out on new churches.