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**Gunns pulp mill finally dead, buried and site for sale**

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After 14 years of bitter division, protests, legal and boardroom stoushes and the demise of a major listed company, the Gunns Ltd Tasmanian pulp mill is finally dead.

The $2.5 billion project — first hatched in 2003 — was consigned to history last night by Gunns’s receivers, Korda­Mentha, who confirmed the pulp mill permit effectively expires today with no buyers to hand.

KordaMentha partner Bryan Webster told *The Australian* the pulp mill site, at Long Reach in the Tamar Valley in northern Tasmania, would now be sold for different uses.

“The pulp mill permit lapses this week and KordaMentha will proceed with the sale process for the land — the 600ha site including 50ha of cleared land,” Mr Webster said.

Gunns Ltd, the now failed timber giant, first proposed the world-scale pulp mill in 2003, provoking a major environmental and community battle over its initial plans to use native forests as feed-stock, as well as pollution concerns. When the project struggled to clear planning ­hurdles, former Labor premier Paul Lennon infamously fast-tracked its approval through parliament after an assessment by hand-picked consultants.

After former Gunns chairman John Gay was deposed by shareholders in 2010, chief executive Greg L’Estrange tried to win back hearts and minds, but a white-knight investor withdrew and Gunns sank into administration in 2012, followed by liquidation.

KordaMentha had hoped to resurrect the project, pushing then Labor premier Lara Giddings to introduce legislation in 2014 to quash a court challenge to the mill permit and extend it to today, but with the plantation estate needed to feed the mill no longer available, the project lacked sufficient feed-stock.

Mr Gay this week told *The Australian* he accepted the mill was dead.

Opponents of the pulp mill were jubilant last night. “I’d like to congratulate the local community because it was the people who stopped this pulp mill,” said Wilderness Society campaign director Vica Bayley. “It was the people who stood up for their air-shed, for their marine environment, for their local amenity and for their forests, and ultimately defeated the biggest company in Tasmania. They also defeated a government that was willing to corrupt the process to further a commercial interest.”

Tasmanian Liberal Treasurer Peter Gutwein made it clear the project had reached the end of the line. “We’ve been one of its strongest backers … but we’ve made it clear if the pulp mill is to go ahead, it needs to go forward under its own steam.”

Mr Gutwein promised the government would work with any job-creating proponent for the site.

Over the years, KordaMentha is understood to have had several parties interested in the land, including for a proposed wind farm, but it is not known how close a sale may be.