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Book launch disrupted

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Brett Lucas, dressed as a panda, is removed by police after disrupting yesterday's launch of Professor Quentin Beresford's book *The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd* at the Tailrace Centre. Picture: PAUL SCAMBLER

POLICE removed three people from the launch of a book into former timber company Gunns yesterday.

About 200 people attended the launch of Professor Quentin Beresford's *The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd* at the Tailrace Centre at Riverside.

Protesters locked themselves into a war of words with Tasmanian personality Peter Cundall partway through proceedings.

Former state government candidate Brett Lucas, who attended the event dressed in a dog suit, compared former Gunns chairman and convicted insider trader John Gay to Winston Churchill.

"Gunns is dead, the pulp mill is a stinking turd and it's rotting away ... it's not even good compost," Mr Cundall said.

Professor Beresford, a former Tasmanian journalist now based in Western Australia, acknowledged that Gunns continued to divide.

He said he encountered plenty of surprises when researching the 442-page text.

"Aspects of Tasmania have deeply disturbed me," Professor Beresford said.

"What really surprised me were the details of the 1989 Edmund Rouse bribery scandal ... (and the) relationship between John Gay and Edmund Rouse."

Professor Beresford described his book as touching on politics, the environment and business.

Australian Conservation Foundation president Geoffrey Cousins spoke at the launch and said aspects of the company's story bordered on fantastical.

"If I wrote that in a novel my editor would say 'Geoff, you've gone over the top'," Mr Cousins said.