

▶▶ **PLANET ARK**

Founders jump ship

By **LESLIE WHITE**

THE founders of the nation's most recognised environment group have walked away from the organisation.

Wimbledon champion Pat Cash and 2010 NSW Australian of the Year Jon Dee have cut all ties with Planet Ark over a \$700,000 deal signed with the logging industry.

The pair are also fuming at Planet Ark's involvement with the Australian Forestry Standard, which Mr Dee believes is reprehensible and some environment groups say approves Australia's worst logging practices. Planet Ark maintains its position is environmentally justified and says certification is the best way to prevent illegal logging and encourage responsible forest management. It says it joined the Australian Forestry Standard review committee with the express aim of strengthening the standard's environmental outcomes.

In a statement due to be released to media today Mr Cash said it was with "deep sadness" that he had been forced to take public action.

"When Jon Dee and I started Planet Ark in 1991, we wanted to set up an organisation that showed people how to help the environment in their daily lives . . . I am proud to say we were successful," Mr Cash said.

"Planet Ark was supported by some of the world's biggest celebrities and millions of Australians became involved.

"When we left Planet Ark in 2008, we left an organisation that was highly successful. It was an environment group that had respect . . . the deal with the forest industry and the controversy around the Peter Maddison TV advert (promoting use of logging products) has eroded Planet Ark's credibility as an environmental organisation.

"The Planet Ark board and management team should be

held accountable for this decision to work with the forest industry, as well as the sale of the Planet Ark Park and recent staff redundancies."

Mr Cash called for Planet Ark to "return to the values that once made it such a great organisation and withdraw from their association with the AFS and the FWPA".

The Weekly Times understands the pair have asked their images not be used in association with the organisation.

Planet Ark failed to respond to requests for comment before deadline but earlier this month told *The Weekly Times* it had always endeavoured to ensure its activities were based on sound scientific research and highly ethical principles.

"We are seeking to improve outcomes in the following areas: biodiversity identification and protection, stakeholder engagement, restriction of conversion of native forests," it said.