



Extending the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement

The Australian and Tasmanian governments have committed to establish a 20 year rolling extension to the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA). To inform this process, we are seeking your feedback.

Stakeholders have had an initial opportunity to provide feedback (from 17 April to 12 June 2015) about extending the Tasmanian RFA, as part of the third five-yearly review of the RFA. This initial feedback, and the Independent Reviewer's report to the third five-yearly review of the Tasmanian RFA, has informed the focus of this additional consultation.

The governments will consider any practical improvements to the Tasmanian RFA, to ensure it remains effective and credible in the long term. While the governments are not negotiating a new RFA, or changing the Agreement's fundamental objectives, they have identified the following improvements to the RFA framework:

- **Streamlined and strengthened review and reporting arrangements** – presently the five yearly reviews examine the implementation of the RFA clause-by-clause. The improved review and reporting arrangements will be outcomes focused.
- **Improved and contemporary dispute resolution mechanisms** – these will give the governments more options for resolving issues about the implementation of the RFA.
- **Improved communication and consultation** – the governments will hold annual officials level bilateral meetings, in the interim years between five-yearly reviews, to discuss issues relating to the ongoing implementation of the RFA.
- **Modernisation of the RFA** – where practicable, the governments will update references to superseded legislation and policy.

The Tasmanian RFA is the governments' policy framework for delivering sustainable forest management in Tasmania. In extending the Tasmanian RFA, the governments will maintain the Agreement's key objectives:

- certainty of resource access and supply to Tasmania's forestry industry
- ecologically sustainable forest management and use of Tasmania's productive forests, and
- a Comprehensive Adequate and Representative reserve system.

Have your say

Please complete the questionnaire and:

- Hand in while visiting a drop-in centre

Monday 5 December 2016, 4.00–7.30pm at Peach & Plum Rooms – Huon LINC, 1 Skinner Drive, Huonville

Wednesday 7 December 2016, 4.00–7.30pm at Wellers Inn, 36 Queen Street, Burnie

Thursday 8 December 2016, 4.00–7.30pm at The LINC, 51 King Street, Scottsdale

- Or, email your completed response to: reviewrfa@stategrowth.tas.gov.au.

Consultation closes **12.30pm AEDT, Friday, 23 December 2016**. Questionnaires received after this time may not be accepted.

Your details

Given name

Family name

Organisation

Mobile phone

Email

Please select one of the following

- I confirm that my completed questionnaire does not contain sensitive information and can be published in full on the Department of State Growth website.
- My completed questionnaire should **NOT** be published on the Department of State Growth website.

Privacy Notice

You are providing personal information to the Tasmanian Department of State Growth (the Department), which will manage that information in accordance with the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*. The personal information collected here will be used by the Department for the purpose of receiving and verifying contact details for stakeholders who have chosen to submit a completed questionnaire on the extension to the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement. Failure to provide this information may result in the non-acceptance of your questionnaire or records not being properly maintained. The Department may also use the information for related purposes, or disclose it to third parties, including the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, in circumstances allowed for by law. You have the right to access your personal information by request to the Department and you may be charged a fee for this service.

Copyright in completed questionnaires resides with the author(s), not with the Department.

In providing a completed questionnaire, you agree that:

- unless you indicate otherwise below (or as otherwise determined by the Department), your questionnaire will be published on the Department's website and will remain on the Department's website indefinitely
- the Department can contact you about your questionnaire
- for published questionnaires from individuals, your name will be published with your questionnaire. All other contact details will be removed from your questionnaire
- for published questionnaires from organisations, your name and your organisation's details will be published with your questionnaire.

Please select your interest/s with extending the RFA

Forest management system

Resource certainty

Research and development

Threatened species

Comprehensive Adequate and Representative reserve system

Heritage values

Socio-economic data

Value of industry

Employment figures

Other interests (please list)

Your feedback

Please list any publicly available non-government documents, reports or data that the Australian and Tasmanian governments could consider in extending the Tasmanian RFA, and that have not already been provided to the governments through the third five-yearly RFA review, or by other means?

Where applicable, please list the publication title, date, author and url.

What improvements could be made to the five-yearly RFA review process to make it more outcomes focused?

What research and development priorities are important to Tasmanian forestry industry stakeholders?

What socio-economic data and analysis is important to Tasmanian forest industry stakeholders?

How could the governments improve outcomes-focused monitoring and reporting on threatened species and biodiversity, as part of extending the Tasmanian RFA?

What other improvements could be made to the RFA framework?

Submission to the proposed Tasmanian RFA extension

I'm a citizen volunteer conservation biologist that helped coordinate a submission on the Tasmanian RFA for North-west Tasmania in 1997. I took Federal Government bureaucrats into forests especially the Tarkine and argued the case for forest conservation in the North-west but also eastern Tasmania. I also lobbied Federal Government ministers in the Howard Government. There was a lot of scientific input into vegetation mapping and modelling of threatened forest fauna such as the Spotted-tailed Quoll and Wedge-tailed Eagle so as to produce a CAR (comprehensive, adequate and representative) reserve system. Despite working full-time as a teacher I devoted an extraordinary amount of time to the RFA consultation process. I was disappointed with the outcome particularly for North-west Tasmania because the RFA failed to protect the Tarkine wilderness rainforest – Australia's largest cool-temperate rainforest.

The Tasmanian RFA negotiated between the Howard Federal Government and the Tasmanian Government was a political agreement endorsed by industry to entrench industrial intensified logging of native forest. It was meant to protect old growth forests, wilderness, threatened species, national estate and world heritage values, and establish a CAR reserve system across the eight bioregions. For the past 20 years the RFA has failed to adequately protect forest biodiversity and threatened species in native forests especially those designated for wood production forests. The RFA is exempt from the Commonwealth EPBC Act. Instead forest flora and fauna protection is regulated by the industries Forest Practices Code and the Forest Practices Authority. The FPC is woefully inadequate to protect biodiversity. Riparian zones are the lifeblood of forest ecology yet streamside reserves are way too narrow and should be at least 100 m wide on both sides to protect stream health. The forest industry is driven by clearfelling, burning and woodchipping of mature and old growth native forests that has resulted in a landscape dominated by even-aged regrowth native forest, eucalypt and pine plantations. All over the world including Tasmania species loss and decline is caused predominantly by habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation. The recent logging of a coupe at Lapoinya exemplifies the failure of Forestry Tasmania (FT) and personnel to identify and protect forest values and threatened species. In this Lapoinya coupe I discovered Brooker's Gum, a threatened plant community, but it was not included in FT's assessment. Furthermore the FPA assessment that ticked boxes failed to identify top predators in the coupe. Local citizen scientists set up camera traps and photographed the endangered Tasmanian Devil and Spotted-tailed Quoll but FT said you had to find devil dens. We found potential den sites but these were destroyed during harvesting operations. We discovered old growth eucalypts on a ridge near the streamside reserve boundary but these were felled during harvesting operations and left on the forest floor. Old growth trees are viewed as impediments to harvesting and are felled or blown up. The former Chairman of Gunns Ltd once said that we should get rid of threatened fauna species for they are common. These appalling forestry practices indicate that the forest management culture within the industry is all about extracting wood and not about best ecological practices. The RFA has failed to recognise the changing status of threatened species and is driving some species such as the hollow-dependent Swift Parrot to extinction. For 20 years FT has continued to log critical breeding habitat of the Swift Parrot in se Tasmania and has ignored

the advice of scientists. FT only recently stopped intended logging of critical habitat of the Swift Parrot on Bruny Island because of public outcry.

The RFA has failed to deliver a CAR reserve system with adequate bioregional landscape connectivity. The RFA agreement provides resource security to the forestry industry but failed to provide secure tenure for forest conservation. The Federal Abbott Government tried in vain to excise forest for logging in the Western Tasmania WHA. The present Hodgman Government plans to extract specialty timbers from Regional Reserves and to log HCV forests set aside for conservation by the Howard-Lennon Governments. The RFA fails to recognise the impact of climate change and the risk of increased severity of wildfires. There is no denying that climate change is real, the planet is warming and that animals are responding. The oceans are warming, becoming more acidic and marine life is moving south. In the Northern Hemisphere birds and insects are moving north and tropical birds are ranging further up mountains. Reserve systems need to be flexible and change with the climate. For example, old growth forests senesce over time so we need to allow young forests currently zoned for wood production to mature into old growth. The current landscape dominated by even-aged native forests and plantations lacks structural diversity provided by old growth elements such as old trees, woody debris and logs on the ground. There is emerging evidence that a landscape dominated by young trees with less structural diversity decreases soil moisture and water run-off so the land is more prone to and less resilient to wildfires that climate scientists predict will increase in severity in se Australia. The mature and old-growth E. regnans forests of southern Tasmania are some of the most carbon dense forests in the world so these forests should be left standing. FT has trashed these forests. It is madness to continue to log these forests.

The RFA has clearly failed too on economic and social grounds. The RFA model of a monopoly supplier (FT) and a near monopoly buyer (Gunns Ltd) has entrenched clearfelling and woodchipping of native forests and accelerated the conversion of native forest and agricultural land to eucalypt and pine plantations through Management Investment Schemes (MIS). This failed model subsidised by taxpayers resulted in the rise and subsequent collapse of Gunns and the demise of many MIS companies plus the collapse of many sawmills and loss of jobs. Unsustainable wood volume quotas, legal supply contracts, low wood prices and low royalties have all contributed to overcutting of native forests and FT making financial losses year after year. To improve the budget bottom line FT is shedding staff and selling assets such as hardwood plantations and tourism ventures. Clearly the model of FT as controller of wood supply, manager of public native forests and plantations, manager of forest reserves and tourism ventures and manager of forest research has not worked.

The RFA has resulted in social conflict over the use and extraction of the native forest asset. The RFA and MIS has driven the expansion of plantations on agricultural land to supply pulp for a pulp mill that never eventuated and never had a social licence and destroyed many farming communities through loss of productive land and loss of jobs. The MIS distorted the market and lured investors through tax minimisation. Social conflict over forests continues because people in Government and in FT want to clearfell native forests behind locked

yellow gates and prohibit public access. On the other hand there are those people who want the forests protected for their biodiversity values, ecosystem services and for ecotourism jobs and other uses such as a honey resource. People voted to stop the logging of old growth forest but under the RFA Tasmanian Governments continued to decimate the tallest hardwood forests in the world and destroyed carbon dense forests that could have helped mitigate climate change and gain future carbon credits. So the RFA has been used to maximise short-term benefits to the forestry industry at the expense of long-term environmental benefits such as ecosystem services and climate mitigation.

The RFA was meant to add value to forest products. Instead we are exporting millions of whole logs to provide overseas jobs at the expense of local jobs and importing wood products. During the last 20 years while the RFA has been operating, logging rates have increased, jobs have declined and revenue from forestry as a percentage of GSP has fallen. The percentage of logged forest called 'waste' is high. Craftspeople could turn this so-called waste into wood products. Category two sawlogs are being transported to the Burnie wharf for export woodchips. Some of these logs were turned into furniture to prove that they can be used to add value and provide jobs but this approach was ignored by industry. Now the Tasmanian Government wants to burn 'forest waste' in furnaces to generate electricity. Native forest debris such as logs on the ground and stumps is not 'waste' and should not be burnt but left to provide habitat and ecosystem services. Burning forests for electricity is a dangerous precedent for it paves the way for industry to liquidate native forests and increase greenhouse gas emissions. A cleaner more economically efficient alternative is to leave mature and old trees in the forest for their carbon storage and multiple ecosystem services.

The logging of a nearby forest at Lapoinya showed that FT failed to engage well with stakeholders with regard to more sustainable forestry practices and gave the impression it couldn't care less about protecting threatened species and their habitat. FT has failed to gain FSC so far but in my opinion before that happens the whole culture of FT and its forest management needs to change so that the FT CEO and staff have a respect and reverence for forest biodiversity and forest ecosystems. At present too many foresters are ecologically illiterate.

In conclusion, extending the RFA for another 20 years is a total disaster for the Tasmanian economy, jobs, forest ecosystems, threatened species, climate mitigation, water management and forest tourism. Extending the RFA without change or minimal change fails to acknowledge that the RFA or equivalent needs a complete overhaul. We need to learn from the mistakes of the past 20 years. The RFA should not be exempt from the EPBC Act. The Forest Practices Code needs to be rewritten so as put forest ecosystem function and management above the present industrial logging practices that are driving threatened species to extinction. The RFA should not be extended without a thorough review and reappraisal of the efficacy of the present reserve system and the design of a new reserve system for the 21st century so as to build in resilience that accounts for the impact of dangerous climate change. The present RFA should be scrapped and not extended.

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