



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- **Modernisation of the RFA** – where practicable, the governments will update references to superseded legislation and policy.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.

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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?

The RFA should not set research and development priorities. The RFA should be restricted to sustainable management and conservation of Australia's native forests.

The RFA should balance economic, social and environmental demands on forests by setting obligations and commitments for forest management that deliver:

- certainty of resource access and supply to industry – building investment confidence
- ecologically sustainable forest management – ensuring forests are appropriately managed and regenerated
- a permanent forest conservation estate – to provide for the protection of Australia's unique forest biodiversity.

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

Not needed except where making a comparison with the 1997 situation and each five year review.

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

Government must honor the commitment given in the RFA. The Tasmanian community Forest Agreement resulting from the 2004 Federal election and the Tasmania Forest Agreement of August 2011 undermined the value of the RFA. The full Federal Court of Australia confirmed that the RFA protected species and thus no need for such reporting or monitoring.

Much of the reporting is ignored by the media, as shown this week with reports of the Greens outrageous claims in relation to the wedge tailed eagle. Yet the Tasmanian RFA's reporting shows the impact on this high profile 'threatened species':

Revision of the population estimates was undertaken in 2005 based on the then current knowledge of nest distribution and activity. There are an estimated 458 territories, representing 86 per cent of the pre-settlement number. Former territories have been lost due to habitat modification, urban development and disturbance from human activity. Activity data indicates that only around 50 per cent of territories are occupied by breeding pairs. By extrapolation, from the demography of similar species, the population is between 1200-1500 individuals with approximately half being mature-aged birds. By extrapolation of the proportion of successful nests to the total known territories, (assuming randomness of disturbance levels), approximately 230 offspring are fledged each breeding season from the 255 active territories.

Prior to the signing of the RFA, only 106 such territories were considered active. This is an increase of almost 150% that has been ignored.

What other improvements could be made to the RFA framework?

Need to confirm that for Tasmania the RFA complies with all findings and recommendations of the Independent review of the EPBC Act. Including a 20 year commitment to the requirements of the Act and a statement to avoid commonwealth approval on a coupe by coupe basis.

The parties need to affirm the finding by the Independent review that the interaction between the EPBC Act and forestry operations is wrongly referred to as an 'exemption'. This term does not, however, accurately reflect the relationship. The rationale for the RFA provisions in the Act recognises 'that in each RFA region a comprehensive assessment has been undertaken to address the environmental, economic and social impacts of forestry operations'. Rather than being an exemption from the Act, the establishment of RFAs (through comprehensive regional assessments) actually constitutes a form of assessment and approval for the purposes of the Act.

any reliance on academic reporting should also disclose affiliation of the researchers, for example in my submission to the EPBC Act review identified the conflict of interest of the academics having input into the that process. To convince him to abandon the RFAs and their accreditation under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity (EPBC) Act, the Wilderness

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Society had released a Statement by Concerned scientists claiming the comprehensive adequate and representative (CAR) reserves were "scientifically flawed". This statement was signed by eleven scientists including Professor Tim Bonyhady (FAAH, FSSA, Director, Australian Centre for Environmental Law, Australian National University (ANU)) and Professor Mark Burgman, (Environmental Science, School of Botany, University of Melbourne), Dr Sarah Bekessy (School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT University, Melbourne) and Dr Peter McQuillan, (Centre for Environmental Studies, School of Geography & Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania).

Since this failure at the ballot box that contributed to the ALP's election loss the environment movement has continued action to overturn these forest policies. This has includes a court action brought by a Greens Senator, further alliances of academics and scientists, an international strategy to discredit Australia's forest management, and an aggressive campaign against both the ALP's and Liberal /National Coalition's support for the RFAs.

The Wilderness Society built upon the success of its letter from concerned scientists and established a 'WildCountry' panel of scientists that includes Professor Hugh Possingham (Director of the Ecology Centre, University of Queensland) and proposed an Australian Research Council linked grant to this group. Subsequently the WildCountry Research and Policy Hub was established in 2005 at the ANU with Professor Mackey as its Director. The panel soon published a paper critical of the RFA reserves' conservation achievements.

The international campaign has likened Tasmania's forest practices to the rampant illegal logging in the third world, and claimed the last remaining old growth forest was threatened. The focus of this campaign has been the modern elemental chlorine free pulp mill proposed for northern Tasmania's heavy industrial zone value adds wood chips in the State rather than exporting them, representing new jobs and economic wealth and a saving of over a million tonnes of greenhouse gas.

The international campaign saw complaints to the United Nations that the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) was threatened by timber harvesting. Despite the Australian Government preparing a substantive report, the World Heritage Committee sent a reactive monitoring team to Tasmania in 2008. They found that:

The area managed under the TWWHA management plan provides a good representation of well-managed tall Eucalyptus forest and there is similar forest outside the property which is also well-managed, but for both conservation and development objectives. The threats to these forests from production forestry activities are well managed and there no need for the boundary of the property to be changed to deal with such threats."

The Wilderness Society and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) refused to accept this finding. At the time Greens Senator Christine Milne was its Australian representative. At its next World Congress when Professor Brendan Mackey of the ANU was elected to replace the retiring Senator, the IUCN voted again to condemn the Tasmanian RFA.

Mackey and Burgman were appointed to the Independent Verification Group headed by former Wilderness Society Director West. Mackey in turn appointed McQuillan and Wilderness Society consultant Peter Hitchcock. Thus undermining the independence and reliability of such reports!