

AUSTRALIAN FOREST CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

ADVANCING FORESTRY CONTRACTING SINCE 2002



23 December 2016

Extending the Tasmanian RFA
Department of State Growth
GPO Box 536 Hobart
TAS 7000

Via email: reviewrfa@stategrowth.tas.gov.au

Re: Extension of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement

The Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA) is a national peak body representing harvest and haul Forestry Contracting Businesses in the forestry supply chain. AFCA's membership represents approximately 75% of wood production which is harvested and hauled across Australia. A significant number of our members operate within Tasmania across both the native hardwood and plantation sectors.

AFCA strongly supports the extension and a 20-year rolling program for the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (Tasmania RFA) and welcomes both state and federal governments commitment to this process going forward.

The Tasmania RFA has been an important tool for creating a framework and monitoring the sustainable management of native forests within Tasmania. It has also been an important vehicle in providing exemptions to legislation requirements for forestry operations.

AFCA notes the Tasmanian RFA policy framework is to provide a higher level of certainty for the operating environment for the forest industry. To this end the objective of the Tasmania RFA has been to *'seek to balance the competing social, economic and environmental demands of the Tasmanian Forest Industry'*. AFCA considers the balancing of these to be critical to both the success and review of an effective RFA.

The outcomes of the most recent Tasmania RFA 5-year review demonstrated the importance of a process for monitoring the RFA and reporting on milestones and achievements over a review period. Whilst the findings of the recent 5-year review were positive future reviews following the RFA extension should provide greater emphasis on social and economic measures and the way these are balanced or otherwise with environmental outcomes.

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Forestry Contracting Businesses play a significant and important economic role in regional areas of Tasmania through employment and investment locally. Over the past 5-10 years there has been a significant decline in Forestry Contracting Businesses as the industry has contracted, security of supply has remained uncertain and areas for conservation have increased. These challenges are often because of policy changes which have occurred outside the RFA process which is of concern.

For example, to meet wood supply requirements Forestry Contracting Businesses have reported a need to adapt practices to more challenging forest areas (greater slope, access etc.) where harvesting is more difficult and incurs additional costs. This remains an ongoing concern for AFCA. The future Tasmanian RFA should consider the implications of wood supply and access to supply and the impact this has economically.

Moreover, lack of resource security has continued to provide uncertainty for Forestry Contracting Businesses which has had an ongoing impact on their ability to invest and continue to innovate and has ongoing impacts in regional communities which many Forestry Contracting Businesses support. AFCA supports the findings of the recent 5-yearly review which acknowledged the need for further socio-economic analysis to be undertaken. This analysis should inform future actions and measures within the future Tasmania RFA extension and 20 year rolling program.

More generally, AFCA supports a greater emphasis on economic and social impacts as well as an assessment of issues which detrimentally impact on future investment and wood supply certainty as part of the Tasmanian RFA extension. AFCA recognises the importance of balancing all triple bottom line elements however there must be sound justification for change and a clear understanding of the impact a change on the triple bottom line. Overall AFCA believes the Tasmanian RFA extension should continue to support a commitment for growth and development of the industry whilst balancing environmental objectives.

AFCA looks forward to working with both the Australian and Tasmanian governments in providing certainty, investment and development of the Tasmanian Forest Industry.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me on <not for publication> or email <not for publication> should you wish to discuss this submission further.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stacey Gardiner', is positioned below the 'Yours faithfully' text. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stacey Gardiner
General Manager