



# 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- **Modernisation of the RFA** – where practicable, the governments will update references to superseded legislation and policy.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](mailto: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 20 year extension

The Tasmanian RFA was meant to be a 20 year plan for the conservation and management of native forest. It was meant to provide certainty to industry as well as protect old growth forests, wilderness, threatened species, world heritage values, and establish a CAR reserve system across the eight bioregions. It had environmental, social and economic conditions to satisfy. The RFA has failed on all accounts. It has failed on economic grounds it has failed on social grounds and very badly on environmental grounds

For the past 20 years the RFA has seen a big increase in woodchipping as this has been shown to provide more dollars for the time taken to do it. This is just outrageous that wood chipping has been driving the economics. This has resulted in a landscape dominated by even-aged regrowth 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 a citizen scientist 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 devil dens had to be found. Potential den sites were found but these were destroyed during harvesting operations. Old growth eucalypts on a ridge were quite majestic near the streamside reserve boundary but these were felled during harvesting operations and left on the forest floor. I saw this and was horrified. 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 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. Reserve systems need to be flexible as we are seeing changes that are happening much faster than was predicted. 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 continued to make financial losses year after year. FT is now 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 asset.

People voted to stop the logging of old growth forest but under the RFA the tallest hardwood forests in the world continued to be decimated. These destroyed carbon dense forests that could have helped store carbon. Millions of whole logs have been exported providing 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 around 80 %. 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.

In conclusion extending the RFA for another 20 years will a total disaster for the Tasmanian economy, jobs, forest ecosystems, threatened species, climate mitigation, water management and forest tourism. Extending the RFA with minimal change fails to acknowledge that the RFA or equivalent needs a complete overhaul. We must learn from the mistakes of the past.

The RFA should not be exempt from the EPBC Act

The present RFA must be scrapped and not extended for 20 more years.