



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- **Modernisation of the RFA** – where practicable, the governments will update references to superseded legislation and policy.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

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.

Blacklow, P (2016). An exploration of pre- and post-stressed timber forms utilizing plantation-grown eucalypt timber. PhD thesis, University of Tasmania.
<http://eprints.utas.edu.au/22982/>

My commentary on Dr Blacklow's work follows.

Most of Tasmania's eucalypt plantations are managed to produce pulpwood. Grown at close spacing on 10-15 year harvesting cycles, they yield small-diameter trees with knots throughout the log, fine for paper-making, but not for the high-value products – fine furniture, craft work, mouldings, joinery and display flooring, panelling and veneers – traditionally made from old-growth native forest eucalypt timber.

Growing sawlogs in Tasmanian plantations commenced in the 1990s, with the aim of creating a high-quality plantation resource for sawing and veneering that would help to substitute for the declining supplies of native forest eucalypt sawlogs as forest areas were increasingly reserved from harvesting and old-growth stands in the remaining production forests have been progressively harvested.

Commonwealth funding from a series of “forest peace deals” associated with forest reservation supported the establishment, by Forestry Tasmania, of some 20,000 hectares of sawlog plantations. Growing sawlogs in plantations on 25-30 year growing cycles requires thinning (removing inferior trees to boost growth in the trees that are retained) and pruning to yield logs that are knot-free and large enough for quarter-sawing in order to produce the stable timber required for high-value applications.

There was considerable scepticism on the part of both timber processors and the conservation movement that plantation sawlogs could be a viable resource for industry. The two eucalypt species that grow well in Tasmanian plantations, blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) and shining gum (*E. nitens*), are different from the three that dominate our native forests (stringybark, gum-topped stringybark and swamp gum), whose timber is marketed under the trade name Tasmanian Oak.

Old-growth blue gum from native forests has a particularly bad reputation among sawmillers, some of whom won't even accept it in their mills, although it is hard and durable and has been used extensively in the construction of jetties and for wooden ship keels. Shining gum is not native to Tasmania, so was an unknown quantity.

Some problems were identified during trials to produce sawn and dried timber from the first plantation sawlogs. There was considerable concern about surface and internal checking (cracks) developing in the dried boards, and low recoveries due to board distortion. It was found that the plantation timber had somewhat lower density and hardness. Sawing, drying and steam reconditioning methods were adjusted and

optimised to suit the plantation logs, in a series of research trials conducted by CSIRO and UTAS researchers and their industry partners in the Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry.

Eventually, methods were developed that enabled high recovery of standard and select grade sawn timber from plantation sawlogs. This was confirmed in a commercial-scale collaborative trial in which 22-year-old plantation-grown shining gum and blue gum logs grown in northwest Tasmania by Forestry Tasmania were processed at the Britton Bros. sawmill at Smithton in 2011. Representative packs of sawn boards from this trial and regrowth native forest timber (stringybark, *E. obliqua*) from the same mill comprised the raw material that Dr Blacklow used in his research.

What Dr Blacklow established beyond doubt is that skilled craft workers can create fine furniture and decorative pieces of the highest value from plantation sawlog timber that has been grown, sawn and dried according to current best practice. He documented, for each of the three timbers, all the manufacturing processes such as re-cutting, sanding, turning, gluing and finishing, that must be carried out in furniture-making and he has explored their limits by steaming and bending them to create remarkable timber forms.

His exploration of *E. obliqua* timber from regrowth native forests is also valuable, given that regrowth sawlogs (less than 100 years old) will increasingly dominate supplies from those of our native forests that continue to provide timber harvests. Interestingly, plantation-grown blue gum and shining gum proved easier to work, in some respects, than did regrowth Tasmanian Oak, although the native forest regrowth timber also yielded beautiful furniture pieces.

His investigation of plantation sawlog timber, and concurrent evaluations by other secondary manufacturers, are important for two reasons. First, we now know that the significant volumes of timber soon to become available from harvesting of Tasmania's existing sawlog plantations can be used in high-value manufacturing. Second, if growing plantation sawlogs is to be profitable in the long term, effective demand for plantation timber from high-value uses such as those demonstrated will be required.

Dr Blacklow's work has filled an important knowledge gap and has significant implications for the future of Tasmania's forestry and craft industries.

The furniture items that he produced were featured in an exhibition in the Plimsoll Gallery in February 2016.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-01/tasmanian-furniture-maker-puts-plantation-timber-to-the-test/7127996>

A summary of the technical research on growing, sawing and drying plantation eucalypt sawlogs is given in the following FWPA review:

Washusen, R (2013). Processing methods for production of solid wood products from plantation-grown Eucalyptus species of importance to Australia. Forestry and Wood Products Australia PROJECT NUMBER: PNB291-1112A

http://www.fwpa.com.au/images/processing/PNB291-1112A_processing_methods_for_SW_products_euc_plantations.pdf

There have meanwhile been parallel developments in veneering of plantation-grown logs. A summary is provided by McGavan R et al. (2014). Veneer recovery analysis of plantation eucalypt species using spindleless lathe technology. *Bioresources* 9(1):623-627.

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

It is now established that high-value sawlogs and veneer logs can be produced from Tasmanian eucalypt plantations managed for sawlog production, with appropriate schedules of pruning and thinning. These "sawlog plantations" can therefore contribute to the resource security of Tasmanian wood-processing industries that produce appearance-grade sawn timber and veneers and carry out downstream manufacturing based on these products.

Forecasts of future resource availability should take into account these findings. Projections of eucalypt sawlog availability should take into account both native-forest and plantation resources.

It is important that plantation managers are aware of these findings and of the potential for producing plantation sawlogs on 25-30 year rotations. Plantation sawlog production requires additional investment over that required for pulpwood plantations, and this higher investment must be recouped through log sales, for the ongoing production of plantation sawlogs to be financially viable.

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

Eucalypt log pricing merits careful study, in order to determine optimum prices for the long-term future of Tasmanian sawmilling, veneering and secondary wood manufacturing industries.

There has been a historical tendency in Tasmania to keep prices of sawlogs from State Forests low (typically lower than those for logs of equivalent quality in other Australian states), with the intention of keeping local processing industries operating. In the long run, low native forest log prices work to the detriment of the forest industries, because forest managers do not receive the resources required for sustainable native forest management and plantation managers do not receive prices that are attractive for growing plantation sawlogs.