

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

HON FELIX ELLIS MP

Forest Practices Amendment Bill 2026

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Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of the Forest Practices Amendment Bill 2026 is straightforward. It seeks to broaden representation on the Forest Practices Advisory Council by providing for the appointment of an additional member with experience in non-forestry agriculture, nominated by our peak agricultural organisation, TasFarmers.

The Forest Practices Advisory Council plays an important role in supporting Tasmania's forest practices system. It brings together expertise from a range of fields to provide advice and contribute to the ongoing effectiveness and integrity of that system.

This amendment recognises the close relationship between forestry and agriculture across Tasmania's landscape. In many parts of the State, these land uses operate alongside one another, and decisions relating to land management have implications for both sectors. This is increasingly the case as these sectors respond to and navigate changes to national environmental laws.

The proposal has arisen from concerns expressed within sections of the agricultural community regarding the operation of the forest practices system and, in particular, the perception that there is no direct agricultural representation on the Advisory Council.

The Government has listened to those concerns.

By creating a position for a person with experience in non-forestry agriculture, nominated by TasFarmers, this Bill will ensure that the perspectives and practical knowledge of Tasmania's agricultural sector are represented at the Advisory Council table. Importantly, farmers are often navigating more than one regulatory system when making decisions about utilising the land they manage, and this amendment will assist their voices in being heard in the forest practices system, to ensure it is easily understandable and navigable.

Importantly, this amendment is not intended to alter the fundamental operation of the forest practices system.

The Bill does not change the statutory objectives of the Forest Practices Act. It does not alter the functions, powers or responsibilities of the Forest Practices Authority. Nor does it change the decision-making arrangements of the Forest Practices Board.

The amendment simply broadens the range of expertise available to the Council and thereby strengthens stakeholder confidence in the advice and perspectives that inform its work.

The Government believes that effective natural resource management benefits from informed participation by those who are affected by regulatory systems. Bringing an additional agricultural perspective to the Advisory Council will help foster greater understanding between sectors, improve communication and support constructive engagement on issues of shared interest.

Tasmania's forestry and agricultural industries are both vital contributors to our regional communities, and to the employment and economic prosperity of our State. They also share a strong interest in the sustainable management of the land and natural resources on which they depend.

The Government acknowledges that this Bill represents a small but important step to improving the understanding of the interaction between agriculture and the forest practices system. We will continue to work with TasFarmers and other stakeholders on additional improvements that can be made.

This Bill reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring that our institutions remain responsive, representative and capable of maintaining the confidence of the Tasmanian communities and industries they serve.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.