

16 January 2013

Mr Stuart Wright
Committee Secretary
Legislative Council
Parliament House
HOBART, TAS. 7000

Dear Stuart,

Re: Legislative Council Select Committee - Tasmanian Forests Agreement

On behalf of the Aboriginal community, I wish to raise a concern about the manner under which the Tasmanian Forests Agreement has proceeded.

In fact, it is oppressive to see the State government, Legislative Council and the present stakeholder groups involved in the Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA) process deliberating as to whom the future tenure and management of Forestry land in Tasmania without the involvement, consideration or endorsement of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Unfortunately, this situation is all too familiar in the modern history of the Tasmanian Parliamentary system.

Previous governments have returned the lands to Aborigines on the basis of their cultural and historic significance to our people. As such, these land returns show a symbolic gesture which acknowledges that land ownership and its management is a meaningful form of reconciliation. But with no mandate to include Aborigines in the Forestry Agreement Bill 2012, the ideology of reconciliation is dispelled. Also, it is inconsistent with the Legislative Council's aim of 'protecting the land for all Tasmanians'. This is exclusive not inclusive.

A delegation of Aborigines had a meeting with members of the Round Table working group (July 2012) to present our aspirations and involvement in the process. The delegation proposed that any lands quarantined for protection under the Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA) ought to, at the least, be allocated to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to manage. The delegates highlighted the conciliatory gains and employment benefits which could be achieved by Aborigines owning and/or managing these lands. Furthermore, our place in the cultural landscape would be acknowledged.

In an acknowledgement of our role in the process, the final report of the Round Table group recommended the government consult with Aboriginal community regarding the ongoing management of proposed new Reserve lands. However, no formal arrangement or dialogue

occurred, which questions the sincerity of the Government not to have considered the recommendation.

To isolate Aborigines by depriving us of the right to participate in this process and to allocate land to the Parks and Wildlife Service, without giving due consideration to involving the original owners of the land, is an indictment on today's parliamentary processes.

I have enclosed a map and encircled the land areas that the Aboriginal community would be keen to develop an ongoing role. These include the areas in the North East in the vicinity of the Mt William National Park, central highlands and the South West cave sites.

On behalf of the Aboriginal community, I urge the Select Committee to be inclusive of a key stakeholder; the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

Yours sincerely,

Clyde Mansell
Chair