



Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Tasmania) Inc

INCORPORATED IN TASMANIA

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14 January 2013

Hon Members of the Legislative Council
Select Committee Inquiry into Tasmanian Forest Agreement Bill
Parliament House
HOBART Tas 7000

Attention: Secretary
Mr S Wright

SUBJECT – SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO TASMANIAN FOREST AGREEMENT BILL (TFA)

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this Select Committee. The Legislative Council is to be congratulated on undertaking a review of the TFA; it is our view the legislation, appears to have been attempted to be rushed through with undue haste by the Government. There seems to have been little or no critical oversight of the deal that the signatories have proposed. We believe the process that has excluded a wide range of the community which has legitimate standing for input into public land management issues.

SSAA (Tas) Inc is an organisation that represents over 3,500 target shooters and hunters in this State. There are many more hunters and recreational users that are not represented by any organisation. Hunting in is a widespread activity in Tasmania, it has long historical connections with our convict past, hunters provide crop protection services to rural industries right across the State (Tasmania has massive mammal and bird pest problems), and it is a legitimate pastime in its own right. The premium hunting species in the State is fallow deer. These observation are relevant to this submission as hunters are part of the State's heritage, the fabric of rural communities and hunting provide recreational activities for many Tasmanians.

Significant debate has occurred about the economic issues that have arisen with the current forestry impasse. There is a view that solving this issue is paramount to other considerations. It cannot be denied it is certainly a particularly important issue, but it is well to remember that recreational activities are important contributors to the turnover of small businesses in urban and regional areas. Given that economies are complex things, sometimes seemingly simple decisions about one thing lead to unintended outcomes for others, thus the focus solely on the forest industry seems unwise.

The process that has led to the development of the TFA Bill has been a concern to SSAA every since it started. In September 2011 SSAA (Tas) Inc wrote to the Minister for Forests. A copy of the letter (Appendix 1) is attached. The reply, (Appendix 2) is also attached. Despite the assurance in 2011 that the Government would be setting any land tenure change agenda, it seems to us that the Government is blindly adopting the recommendations of the Signatories with little regard to the views of others. The process seems to be largely non negotiable.

Additionally of great concern is that there is a World Heritage Listing proposed in parallel to this bill, handing State land management decisions to the Commonwealth and an unaccountable overseas committee.

Why does SSAA (Tas) Inc think it has an interest in this debate?

As users of public land, an important resource for hunters, SSAA (Tas) Inc considers the interests of hunters will be compromised if this deal proceeds in its current form.

What are the concerns?

- Areas of State Forest Land that have been traditionally extremely important hunting areas will;
 - At minimum go into a Nature Conservation Act tenure that may still allow hunting but on less favourable terms
 - At worst go into a nature Conservation Act tenure, or World Heritage area that will completely exclude hunting access
- Recreational users are not being offered any input into the durability of this process. We believe hunters should continue to have access to these areas and that there should be some tests to make sure the deal is honoured in the event of it if it proceeding. The Special Council, as per the current Bill, doesn't allow any other stakeholder input for a period of time, by which all the rights we currently enjoy may have been lost as the process will be largely completed.

We would like to illustrate the above points by example.

The example provided is in the Lake River Road area, south west of Cressy, in an area known as the Big Den. It is an important deer hunting area. It has a mosaic of private and public tenures. From what we can glean from the large scale Map A, it appears a number of pieces of public land in this vicinity, currently available for hunting are considered necessary to be reserved. A map of our interpretation of the changes is attached (Appendix 3). Areas that we believe are currently available for hunting in some form, but will be reserved are dotted in red. *(Note - The map was sourced from the information pack of a member who has hunted in this area, not directly from Forestry Tasmania.)*

The outcome of the worst case for this area is obvious, but even if this is not proclaimed World Heritage area or National Park and is set aside as a tenure under the NCA that allows hunting, maintaining current access is problematic.

Although the Parks and Wildlife Service issue permits to hunt under section 39(c) of the *Firearms Act*, and have after negotiation allowed limited hunting in some central highlands blocks that went from State Forest to Conservation Areas as a result of the TCFA, there seems no particular obligation

on them to open the areas up for hunting. In contrast, the attitude of Forestry Tasmania is generally to allow hunting unless obvious circumstances exist to exclude an area of State Forest. PWS have in the past tended to exclude hunting unless a strong case can be made for it. With all the recreational land that is potentially being passed to PWS to manage, it is suggested that PWS may care to re-evaluate how it approaches management of certain tenures. This re-evaluation could be an adjunct to the Bill and the legislation eventually required for the restructure of Forestry Tasmania.

Additionally there are a number of areas in Eastern Tiers and Central Highlands that are currently leased for hunting purposes and parts of these are shown on Map A as earmarked for reservation. Many of these adjoin existing Forest Reserves. Map A doesn't make this obvious. These leases will become problematic under an NCA tenure. They will only remain in place whilst under the protection order; after that they will probably not be renewed. It seems a nonsense that proposed reserves cannot be appended to the existing forest reserves. In this instance the current uses, other than harvesting should seamlessly continue.

Under the *Forestry Act*, section 20, Forest Reserves can be declared for a wide range of purposes, including recreation. The exclusive transfer to NCA tenures under this Bill is yet another change from past, sensible practice of previous agreements and processes.

Now the process has moved to this review stage, rather than declaring outright opposition to the Bill, (although we are perturbed how it has been presented as non negotiable, even though there are a number of "review" stages in the orders) we would suggest, perhaps some amendments could be made. It is acknowledged amendments may have value if the Select Committee sees merit in preserving the deal to access the rather inadequate Commonwealth funding and to hope "peace in our forests" occurs. SSAA (Tas) Inc suggest these amendments would be along the following lines;

- Reserves be also be made under the Forestry Act, not just the Nature Conservation Act
- The Bill could provide provisions be inserted in the Nature Conservation Act that that obligates the authority managing land under this Act to preserve existing leasing arrangements, (not just until they expire) and grants recognition of existing land uses which cannot be extinguished or modified without due cause and must be subject to some level of parliamentary scrutiny. There should be a broader durability test for other users who are currently being told "trust us" (see Appendix 2) and it should be hard wired into the process.
- Increase the representativeness of the Special Council from the outset, removing some of the existing signatories if needs to be maintained as a manageable group.

As we discussed earlier, one of our greatest concerns is the declaration of World heritage status over some key hunting localities. The exact locations at the time this submission was prepared are a mystery, but assuming worst case from previous attempts to lock up land in this way we expect some issues. As the proposed World Heritage nomination is not a direct consequence of this Bill, it is a little difficult for us to see how this Bill can be amended by the Select Committee to reflect the broader community view on such a declaration.

However we believe that for the sake of a wide spectrum of recreational and commercial users (i.e. miners) the Select Committee should consider how mechanisms for the protection and reserve order process under this Bill could be reviewed in the Upper House if the Government tries to achieve its goals by ramping up this parallel process. A parallel process, without amendment or

review is clearly against the wishes of a large number of Tasmanians. In this matter we feel we have to rely on the Committee's experience in these matters to ensure the interests of all Tasmanian's are protected.

SSAA (Tas) Inc again commends the Legislative Council on their approach to including the community in this legislative process. We hope our submission has been useful and wish the Committee well in reviewing this Bill.

R. J. Harris

Secretary
SSAA (Tasmania) Inc.,





Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Tasmania) Inc

INCORPORATED IN TASMANIA

PO BOX 516, Glenorchy, Tasmania 7010

Appendix 1

19 September 2011

The Hon Bryan Green MHA
Minister for Forests
10th Floor, Executive Building
15 Murray Street
Hobart, 7000

Dear Minister

I am writing regarding the ongoing forest negotiations, which seem to be now known as the Intergovernmental Agreement Process.

This process is of great concern to this Association, as it has the potential to seriously affect the interests of our members, but has not given them any input as stakeholders into the process. Although at times this has been described as a community driven process, this seems to be a long way from where we sit.

Our members have a deep interest in outdoor recreational pursuits, including hunting, fishing and access to public land for 4WD driving. We are concerned that these pursuits are at risk; particularly if, as the Green movement is lobbying for, if this huge area of public property is put into National Parks or reserves that cater only for a small vested interest.

Recreational users have been well served by the concept of multiple use forests, as administered by Forestry Tasmania. We request that except in the occasional exceptional circumstances that this land remain under the management of Forestry Tasmania, whatever the outcome of the process.

Granted there are some types of conservation tenure, other than those declared under the Forestry Act, that cater for our members interest in hunting it has been our experience that the Parks and Wildlife Service is inclined to manage these by exception and relatively few areas compared to the total are available for this purpose.

Consequently we would like to see the bulk of the land management responsibility retain the status quo, unless other more flexible options are available.

Yours sincerely

Richard Cains
President
SSAA Tasmania

Hon Bryan Green MP

DEPUTY PREMIER

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Appendix 2



Mr Richard Cains
President
SSAA Tasmania
PO Box 516
GLENORCHY TAS 7010

2:7 OCT 2011

Dear Mr Cains

Thank you for your letter of 19 September 2011 regarding future access rights to current areas of State Forest that may hold high conservation values, following the implementation of the Tasmania Forests Intergovernmental Agreement (the IGA).

To clarify the IGA implementation process, the Tasmanian and Australian Governments will receive a report from an Independent Verification Group (IVG), headed by Professor Jonathon West, at the end of 2011 and under the terms of reference provided to Professor West, this group will advise on "the conservation values contained in areas, and the boundaries of potential reserves, from within the ENGO-nominated 572,000 hectares of High Conservation Value native forest". I stress that this group will not actually recommend the future management classification of these areas, just what conservation values they hold.

Based on this advice, it will be the Government that recommends and then the Parliament that will approve the appropriate land tenure for any reserves nominated by the IVG. In preparing its recommendation the Government will consider other uses of the land, such as hunting, fishing and 4WD access as well as bee keeping and mining that could take place within those areas without affecting the protection of the identified conservation values.

As you well know, responsible 4WD clubs are often the first to identify damage to infrastructure or report illegal dumping. In the same vein responsible game and wildlife management can often lead to a better environmental outcome for areas when compared to simply banning these activities outright, and these factors will be part of my consideration as we make these decisions.

I hope this helps you better understand the process that we will be going through, and provides you with some assurance that the future needs of your members will be considered in due course through this process.

Yours sincerely

Bryan Green MP
Minister for Energy and Resource

Appendix 3

