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Hon A. P. Harriss MLC
Parliament House
Hobart, Tasmania 7000

SUBMISSION

For and on behalf of the people of Tasmania regarding pending Legislation currently before the Upper House in connection with and embracing all aspects of the Inter Governmental Agreement on the future of Tasmanian Forest Legislation.

Dear Mr Harriss,

We are alarmed and disgusted by the actions of government, both State and Federally in their attempt to blatantly steal and deny equitable access to all Tasmanians of our current forest resources.

It may very well be time for all sitting members of both houses to review the meaning of the term 'democracy' and then consider within that meaning where a mandate to remove us from equitable and rightful access to any of our natural resources by any political party, either locally or Federally has ever been given?

While the current Legislative Council is made up of members duly elected by the peoples to represent us, members of the House of Representatives were not.

We the peoples could and possibly should seek determination whether we have legitimate representation in the Lower Houses of both State and Federal politics and whether all Bills and Acts are legal and binding by governments that have seemingly elected themselves?

Of course, such action would be a waste of valuable time and monetary resources in resolving the current situation regarding debate of the IGA legislation before the Upper House.

Speedy resolution of the Forest situation and all future natural resources development in this state is in the best interests of all Tasmanians, but will only come about by sound governance, common sense based on a solid research foundation and above all, be in the best interests of all present and future generations of Tasmanians!

As far as Heritage listings, Federal Australia and the rest of the World, they can all go jump!

The parliament of Tasmania is elected first and foremost to serve the peoples of this state, and only after having provided the necessary infrastructure, legal and equitable access to resources and sustainable management of those resources, should they ever contemplate negotiating with outside parties interested in obtaining access to any resource owned by the Tasmanian people!

Of course, history shows us that the opposite has always been the case!

The current situation of conflict in our Forest Industry has been solely instigated, fuelled and maintained by past and present government incompetence, incompetent academic advice and outside influence by profiteering international companies with little or no regard for the rights or welfare of the Tasmanian peoples or their resources either! That includes local internationally owned Media hell bent on conflict to fill their newspapers and idiot boxes.

The premier, deputy premier, Bacon, McKim, Morris, Booth, O'Conner, Putt, Brown and Wilke...all from interstate or overseas?...and then of course the nationalities, bases and financial backers of all the signatories to the IGA?

Where can it be shown in the whole process of the IGA that the Tasmanian people have been duly represented or approval sought from them to proceed to the point of legislation?

Would the current government please enlighten us to the number of truly Tasmanian representatives we have representing us... and the number of non Tasmanians from interstate and elsewhere currently being funded by the Federal Government under the guise of the Dole to protest and cause conflict in our forests?

Wasn't it the 'Hawke' government that opened a Dole Office in Strahan during the Lake Pedder dispute so that interstate protesters wouldn't have to travel the treacherous route to Queenstown and could thus remain at the protest site while local Tasmanian's were given no such privilege? When the outcome was achieved and the protesters left, so did Dole Office access in Strahan.

It is worth considering that in a world of war and conflict, peace is sometimes nothing more than time out to reload?

The Legislative Council itself is once again under threat by the Lower House but this time the threat is far greater than it has ever been. Why?...just read the above list of interstate representatives in the lower house. Unless the sitting government is removed and soon, there may not be a Legislative House to sit in?

If the Legislative Council considers that it may need the support of the greater community to survive attack from the Lower House, then it must show support to the greater community by upholding our legal right to equitable access to all our current state resources by defeating the Forest IGA Bill before it.

This Bill does nothing to bring peace and stability to the Forest Industries of Tasmania. It does little more than appease one minority group with another.

Sound governance and effective legislation is needed now, not only for our natural resources, but in all areas affecting the lives of all Tasmanians. Sweeping issues under the carpet and locking up areas is not the answer...it hasn't worked in the past...and the past, like a rabid dog always comes back to bite you as is the case now!

The current situation of conflict and chaos within all sectors of administration making up the Tasmanian resources sector is bought about by the inability of government to control or the deliberate and intended actions of the Tasmanian Parliament in handing over control to appointed Senior Officials and Board Members, each with a vested interest in the resource they are given to oversee. In the real world, this is known as 'insider trading'!

'Hogwash' you might say?...as a Legislator, where are the adequate laws and legislation to protect both the resource and the Tasmanian people from these actions?

The trouble is twofold. Either there is no adequate legislation to protect or there is so much protection that any genuine legitimate claim for access is bogged down within the multiple layers of governmental incompetence. Either way, very few profit handsomely while the majority of Tasmanians and Tasmania as a whole loses out badly!

As a local from the Huon Valley, you are only too aware of what happened to the Apple Industry, what has happened and is still transpiring within the Fishing Industry, what is transpiring within the Aquaculture Industry and from the days before APM at Geeveston, what has transpired within the forestry Industry.

The Forestry debate is not a war between the haves and have nots, it's about the right to access. All interested parties, especially the Tasmanian people should have the right to access the resources of this state, albeit under strict legislated control with sustainable outcomes and above all else, open, transparent and accountable governance!

The situation of conflict has been brought about through none of the above and we the people are demanding accountability!

Where is the legislation to prevent unlawful decimation of our resources by tree spikers and tree sitters? Where is the legislation to prevent continued blockage of access to legal workplaces? Where is the legislation to prevent the dockage and supply of ships undertaking what could be considered terrorist acts and piracy in international waters adjacent to Tasmania?

Where is the equality in any legislation if the courts simply decide whether you are bound to act within the laws of this state or are exempt from them depending on who you are, how much money you have or who might be backing your actions?

While you may be witnessing the upheaval of minority groups and slightly bending to their ways, the silent majority have had a gut full and are about to stand up and be counted.

With changes in technology, public awareness and the expectation of accountability has never been higher and it is only a fool that doesn't believe in the end they will expect nothing less.

The situation of 6% of the population controlling the vote is about to end. Where does that figure come from? Tasmanians are predominantly Labour or Liberal voters. Approximately 45% of the popular vote is guaranteed for either party. Want to win power and government? Win 6% of the minority parties and you have both!

With the realization that majority government in this state died somewhere back in the middle of last century, we the people are presented with two options. Firstly...we demand that adequate checks and balances be put in place to protect us, our resources and our access to them. Or Secondly...we recognize none of them and go merrily on our way. For the majority of us older folk, we would much prefer the first option before the second.

What has all this to do with the current pending legislation regarding the Forest IGA....everything!

CHANGES IN GOVERNANCE

Local concerns and the changes they would like to see implemented regarding governance of Forestry Tasmania and other government controlled Authorities.

Forestry Tasmania

Forestry Tasmania should immediately be restructured and returned to a Commission, accountable to the peoples of Tasmania under direct control and regular review of a Parliamentary Committee.

The Forestry Commission should have no vested business interests in the forest resources of this state and the Commission shall not have on its Senior Management Board any individual or representative of any Company, Contractor or Association with a financial interest within the Forest Industries of this state.

ie: The Forestry Commission shall assess, manage, issue a permit of approval for access, police, protect and replenish the timber resources infrastructure of this state on an equitable basis to all companies, contractors and individuals. This process should include the issuing of permits of approval for the removal of craft and firewood.

The Forestry Commission should not have the responsibility of collecting any monies or fees for permits issued.

ie: Once a permit of approval is issued, the right to removal of that asset will only become valid when the appropriate fee is paid at any branch of Service Tasmania. Service Tasmania already has a substantial network in place and should be expanded to become the central focal point of all future development within Tasmania. How much easier it would be for policy makers, treasury and good governance if all information regarding this state's current economic situation etc were housed under the same roof instead of fragmented and in total disarray as it is at present?

Parks and Tourism

All Parks, Recreational Areas and Tourist Ventures currently under the control and maintenance of Forestry Tasmania should become the responsibility of Parks and Wildlife and Tourism Tasmania, each accountable to their own Parliamentary Committee.

All areas of Tasmania should be re-assessed, including National Parks, Forestry and Tourism for their potential economic, recreational and heritage values for present and all future Tasmanians.

That all future proposals for Parks, whether Marine or Land based, be subject to rigorous and transparent research protocols so that no area is set aside and access denied simply for the sake of locking it up.

That the University of Tasmania be financially held accountable for any defective data provided that leads to the loss of access to any area by insufficient or fudged research data denying Tasmanian peoples open and legal access.

Fire and Disaster Protection

The Forest Industry should continue and be expanded under the control of The Forestry Commission and all roads and infrastructure be maintained to alleviate the risk of total burn out of the entire state due to the threat of a major fire within our National Parks system.

ie: One major earthquake, tsunami or fire could render all that is currently locked away worthless to this generation and the next.

We the people are concerned that in its current form, the Southwest Nation Park poses an enormous threat to lives and infrastructure should a large fire begin within the western boundaries of this park. If more is locked away and the road system put in place by Forestry Tasmania is allowed to fall into disrepair, what hope do we have in the near and foreseeable future of this dealing with this threat before it destroys us all?

It is only a matter of time and the Forest IGA is foolhardy and criminal in its negligence of considering this scenario within the recommendations of its proposal, and therefore be doomed to the scrap heap of failed Bills not worthy of legislation.

Public Discontent

Whether government realizes it or not, there is currently a general public resentment bordering on hatred for the Tasmanian Greens within the greater community, and sadly, this resentment is starting to be felt for all those that have settled here from other states in the past few years whether they are green or not.

Should this Bill pass the Upper House, then, as I stated in an earlier email to you, the real war over forests in Tasmania hasn't even started yet.

Personally, I am amazed at the network of information the local Tasmanian people have at their disposal, but I have been equally shocked from some of the responses I have received in trying to gauge local sentiment regarding the IGA.

Most stated they would simply vote Liberal, even though they were die hard Labour voters. Their reason..."We didn't vote Green and we won't ever again".

On the worst case scenario..."They won't keep it even if they lock it up 'cause we'll burn it to the ground if they do".

Above all though, most were disgusted at the pittance offered for heritage listing.

For most of the people, the asking price is one million dollars per annum on a lease only basis...fifty years...half a billion dollars. For outright sale, Tasmania isn't!

And finally, most locals are scathing at the signatories chosen to accept or reject the IGA in the Lower House on their behalf. "They don't represent us, they all have much to gain and we nothing...we are being sold out and they will pay"!

To all members making up the Committee of Review into the proposed IGA Bill, thank you for giving this proposal closer scrutiny it deserves before it is passed into law or rejected on its own deficiencies

Maybe simply waiting until the Liberals win the next election is all the action that needs to be taken at this point of time?

With regards and sincerity,

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