

Tasmanian Forest Peace Process

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Legislative Council decision on Forestry Tasmania and the peace process

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Due to time constraints I have chosen to limit my comments about the above to the issues of water, threats to wildlife, and a pulp mill - the potential for which still remains in the forestry agreement under discussion by the Select Committee, despite the collapse of the proponent Gunns Ltd, and the determined, steadfast community opposition to the project which will never, ever cease.

Given that recently released statistics show the forestry industry in Tasmania is a minor industry for Tasmania, employing less than two per cent of the population, its ongoing reliance on government subsidies cannot be considered acceptable. And since little or no profit for the taxpayer is ever returned from GBE Forestry Tasmania, it is abundantly clear that a complete overhaul of the company, and its board and management, is long overdue.

Tasmania should, and could, have a vibrant forestry industry, but it is time the current model was completely overhauled, and management recognises and understands the need for sustainable practices that do not involve clearfelling, chemical use, and burning.

The State approval process for Gunns' Pulp Mill development was rorted by the Tasmanian Parliament and is widely regarded as being undemocratic and corrupted. Over 700 public submissions were received by the Resource Planning and Development Commission, the majority of which totally opposed the project, and its location. Public opposition to the pulp mill has not and will never diminish, and the building of a pulp mill in Tasmania – regardless of its location - should never be considered in any reassessment of Tasmania's forestry industry. Such a project can never be sustainable, economically, socially or environmentally.

Gunns Limited stated the proposed mill would be of such a scale that timber would have to be imported into Tasmania from Victoria and SA – which also strongly suggests Tasmania will never be able to meet the demand for a reliable ongoing feedstock for such such a massively unsuitable development.

Community Impact

Too many Tasmanian communities have already been negatively impacted by the forestry industry. Small townships have struggled to survive as the industry has shrunk, and unreasonable and unsustainable promises were made to contractors that were subsequently broken. Gunns, for example, is responsible for the loss of many forestry jobs through the closure of timber mills and the collapse of the woodchip market. A failure by the industry to recognise a shift in global woodchip markets has contributed to the current precarious and uncertain future the industry faces today. Without the necessary Forest Stewardship Council accreditation – a process that could take several years to achieve – it is a future that will remain uncertain without a drastic overhaul and re-modelling.

Aggressive forestry practices such as cable logging and burning are widely considered responsible for water catchment degradation in the majority of Tasmania's rivers; the ugly scarring and degradation of landscapes; soil erosion; and the silt problems being experienced in the Tamar River. Aerial spraying of toxic chemicals over plantations, with little or no warning given to residents, has resulted in serious health issues for many people, as well as immeasurable harm to vulnerable wildlife from their poisons.

A complete revision of forestry is essential if the industry is to survive, but any agreement that is reached should not include provision for a pulp mill.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission, and I trust you will consider my comments in making your final decision.

Yours sincerely,

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