

## FACT SHEET

### *Forestry Amendment Bill 2009*

- The purpose of the Bill is to amend the *Forestry Act 1920* to allow Forestry Tasmania to assess the safe use of forestry roads by the public, determine the mass and dimensions of the heavy vehicles that use forestry roads and close a forest road or section of a forest road to the public where necessary for the purpose of forestry operations.
- Currently, the majority of roads on State forest are open to the public and are considered 'Public Streets' within the meaning of the *Traffic Act 1925*. Accordingly, the regulatory regime for public roads under that Act and the *Vehicle and Traffic Act 1999* applies to forestry roads.
- In 1996, a nationally agreed standard for vehicle mass and dimension limits was introduced. Tasmania like the other jurisdictions provides exemptions for vehicles that fall outside the general mass and dimension limits specified under the regulations. In particular Tasmania provides exemptions through a Gazette Notice and permit system that allow High Productivity Vehicles (HPVs) and Higher Mass Limit (HML) vehicles to exceed the standard mass and/or dimension limits on public streets that have been assessed as meeting the standards for vehicles of that greater mass and/or dimension.
- It is expected that many forest roads would not meet the established HPV route standards to enable their use by HPVs.
- Upgrading Forestry roads to a standard for HPV use would involve significant costs to Forestry Tasmania. In most cases, upgrading would be an impractical use of funds as roads such as coupe and bush tracks are used intermittently, for example, harvesting every 30 years for a period of a few months only.
- Forestry roads that are not up to standard would effectively become closed to HPV's, with a damaging impact on the productivity of the forest industry.
- Forestry Tasmania is best placed to determine which roads can safely be used by HPVs and HML vehicles, and under what circumstances, and when public access should be restricted due to safety concerns arising from forestry activities.
- While it is proposed to allow Forestry Tasmania to assess the safe use of forestry roads by the public and to determine the mass and dimensions of the heavy vehicles that use forestry roads, all other traffic and road safety laws will continue to apply to forestry roads.