

NEW FOREST SPLIT

Secret

Aboriginal land deal called off

By ROSEMARY BOLGER

THE state government has killed off a deal to hand back 572,000 hectares of state forest to the Aboriginal community, fearing it could derail the forestry peace deal.

Revelations about the secret deal yesterday prompted angry reaction from the Greens and environment groups, who called for Forestry Tasmania's board to be sacked.

Premier Lara Giddings said the draft agreement between the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Government-business Forestry Tasmania and the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania was an unwelcome distraction from the intergovernmental agreement process.

"We're not interested in alternative ways of dealing with these issues," Ms Giddings said yesterday.

"At the moment we want to remain focused on the IGA. I don't want to see

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calls to sack Forestry Tasmania's board, saying it had done nothing wrong in negotiating with industry and the Aboriginal community.

"Essentially it is, of course, looking at a different way of dealing with the reserve agenda, which is not something the government is considering at all," Ms Giddings said.

Forestry Tasmania managing director Bob Gordon said the TAC's proposal had "considerable merit" and denied the draft agreement would undermine the forests agreement.

"It is in fact an acknowledgment that Forestry Tasmania expects that there will be further reserves." Mr



Forestry Tasmania managing director Bob Gordon.



Forest Industries Association of Tasmania chief executive Terry Edwards.

WHAT WAS IN IT FOR THEM?

THE TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL CENTRE

- Ownership of 572,000 hectares of land.
- 60 jobs and 30 trainee positions.
- A greater say in logging at significant cultural sites.

FORESTRY TASMANIA

- A large chunk of \$7 million of Commonwealth funds

FOREST INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION OF TASMANIA

- Good PR.

WHY THEY TALKED

Handover would boost jobs: Mansell

THE Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre said the deal would represent the single biggest boost to Aboriginal employment in Tasmania in 100 years.

conservation and how much will continue to be logged.

"The land that they are talking about is our land," Mr Mansell said.

where logging would still be allowed.

While environment groups will be opposed to any of the