

Legislative Council Select Committee on the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012

Submission from Mark Chin.

There are three overriding reasons why the reservation of significant additional areas of native forest will not achieve the proposed outcomes.

1. The first is that recent history tells us that conflict will not be resolved until all native forest logging is stopped. As evidence I offer the following:-

- a) Writing in the Sunday Australian Lyndon Schneiders (director of the Wilderness Society) states "...to enable a sustainable and competitive industry to grow based increasingly on **well managed plantations** and certified through the Forest Stewardship Council process." [The emphasis is mine]. The aim of the more hard line conservation groups within Tasmania and indeed throughout Australia is to stop all harvesting of native forest.
- b) Since the mid seventies significant areas of production forest have been set aside in reserves in an attempt to pacify elements of the conservation movement. Past reservation has never achieved the desired outcome and it is unlikely the new proposals will achieve much more. Indeed there are political elements that need conflict to survive.

It should be noted that past reservations have often been as a result of recommendation by independent scientific panels. It should also not be forgotten that many reserves were created by the initiative of the Forestry Commission itself and that areas such as the Douglas Apsley reserve were fully supported by the forestry community.

2. The second reason is that native forest logging of the dry forests is sustainable with little long term environmental impact and can have beneficial environmental outcomes. As evidence I offer the following:-

- a) The recent purchase of large areas of Gunns Ltd. private property in the Central Highlands. These areas were purchased, so I am informed, by the likes of Matthew Denholm writing in the Australian to protect them from logging and preserve the high conservation values inherent in the areas. Conveniently ignored is the fact that these areas were acquired by Gunns Ltd. when they purchased Boral Ltd. who in turn acquired them from Northern Woodchips who purchased them from Tasmanian Board Mills who had used them to supply feedstock to their sawmills in the area. Now over the last 100 years these forests have supplied millions of dollars worth of timber and provided employment to hundreds of people and yet still retain their high conservation value.
- b)) Many species rely on disturbance to propagate and survive. In the early 1980s an area near Reedy Marsh was clear felled burnt and seeded. There was some local protest

at the time. Ten years after harvest local conservationists claimed growth rates on the regeneration were very slow and the areas would not recover properly, yet today they want it reserved for its high conservation values as those plant species that require disturbance are present in abundance.

c) Claiming sustainability of 'clearfall burn and seed' as used in the wet eucalypt forest is harder to justify. It must be acknowledged that the impact on vegetation and most wildlife at the time is devastating. However our view tends to be short term; the evidence shows that if left undisturbed after about 80 years the composition (though of course not the age of the individual species) is largely the same as it was before harvest. There is no reason future generations could not allow that forest to reach old growth maturity. Significant areas of mature wet forest are already reserved and it may be there is a need for some additional reservation. However it should be recognised that harvesting increases the overall diversity of the forest estate.

c) The forests are not static. Vegetation changes with time. The old growth forests we admire today will probably not be there for our great grandchildren. Left undisturbed they will gradually be replaced predominantly by myrtle forest until the next wildfire comes along to regenerate the Eucalypts.

3. The third reason is the resulting loss of management expertise and local knowledge. This includes the resources and knowledge in managing the areas and combating the inevitable wildfires that will occur within these reserves. The forest industry, both contractors and supervisors have a wealth of expertise in cost effective maintenance and management of assets including roads, bridges and dams. The government agency who will be charges with the management of these existing assets in reserved areas has not to date demonstrated the same capacity for efficient management.

About the submitter.

I was a forester in Tasmania for 36 years having trained in the UK before taking up an appointment with then Tasmanian Forestry Commission. During my career I worked for both government agencies and private companies before setting up my own company which I ran for 25 years. I am now retired and living in Victoria.