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To The Legislative Council Select Committee.....

I am writing to express my opinion about the Tas Forest Agreement which the Legislative Council has to vote about soon.

I am a private land owner of 18,000 acres with mainly high value commercial native forests and some plantation.

The IGA was said by the current government that it would not affect private forestry but this has proven to be wrong. I and colleagues haven't been able to sell any wood for the last 12 -18 months due to there being no market for residues making it unviable for us to harvest.

I put this down partly to the high Australian dollar, but mainly to uncertainty caused by green groups hindering investment and protesting overseas at end markets. Some green groups also object to future residue uses.

With the IGA process private forestry have had no say even though they are traditionally a large contributor to state timber production.

Some of the main issues for me are:-

1. Durability – I would hope that this clause is rock solid and strengthened by the Legislative Council the gives by the environment groups are goodwill only. Recent moves are that the government is proposing appears to reserve all the forests in advance. This is unacceptable to me. I think it would more appropriate to stagger the reserves over a lot longer time period, a minimum of ten years. The durability should also include the private forests as well.

2. In the latest agreement the forest practices code is mentioned but no details given. To my opinion the code as it stands is a fair compromise between production and conservation on private land. There is a push by some green groups to further restrict harvesting. We already have a community obligation to set 10 – 20% of our land in reserve. I am concerned that changes for further reservations or costs could make harvesting unviable. To my opinion it is on the edge of this already.
3. FSC certification there is no mention of green groups supporting this on private land.
4. (Buy out of sawmills.) Local sawmills have been most of private forests markets, this will surely affect our ability to sell in local areas and possibly force larger forest owners to export logs out of the state. There has been no talk of compensation for private forestry due to closing down their markets.

Disadvantages are that Tasmania cannot afford and shouldn't have to have over half the state locked up to appease 10 – 20% of the population

I think it is unfortunate the greater Tasmanian public have had no input up until now.. It appears that the industry groups are desperate for money and peace.

I am a member of the AFG Committee and have seen the submission presented by us and agree with everything in it. It goes into much more detail about issues affecting private land owners.

I would be happy to be available for the select committee to discuss any further information or opinions that you may want.

Yours faithfully

Mark Cornelius

Chairman Tasmanian Oak Growers (Group of private forest owners representing approx. 50,000 hectares)
Australian Forest Growers – Tasmanian Tree Farmer of the Year 2009

Disclaimer: These are the personal views of Mark Cornelius

