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11 January

Mr Stuart Wright  
Secretary  
Legislative Council Select Committee into the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012  
Legislative Council  
HOBART 7000  
Email: [tfacommitee@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:tfacommitee@parliament.tas.gov.au)

18 January 2013

Dear Mr Wright,

We act as advisors to the group of 12 Tasmanian Regional Councils that have joined to represent regional communities on important development issues affecting Tasmania.

Representatives of the Councils have already appeared before the Legislative Council during its initial consideration of the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012 and the collective group is now pleased to present the attached submission for the Select Committee's consideration.

Council representatives would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee to further expand on the points raised in this submission.

If you are able to advise me of an appropriate date and time, I will be pleased to coordinate the Council representatives to attend.

I can be contacted on email at [tony@wearebright.com.au](mailto:tony@wearebright.com.au) or by mobile on 0417 318 178.

I look forward to your advice.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Harrison', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Tony Harrison**  
**Director**



## SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE INTO THE TASMANIAN FORESTS AGREEMENT BILL 2012

### **Executive Summary**

The group of 12 Tasmanian Regional Councils submits that prior to passing any legislation to implement the Tasmanian Forests Agreement, the Legislative Council must:

- Require the Tasmanian and Commonwealth Governments conduct a comprehensive socio-economic study of the impact of the agreement on the Tasmanian economy and particularly on regional communities.
- Require that the Tasmanian Government undertake a comprehensive community consultation program to seek the views of the broader community impacted by the agreement, rather than rely simply on the result of the negotiations between the peak environmental and forest industry groups.
- Demand that the Tasmanian Government develop and implement a specific and effective economic development plan for regional communities impacted by the retraction of the forest industry.
- Demand that the Commonwealth and State Governments provide full information on the allocation of the compensation funding, including details of who has / will receive funding, how much has been retained by government for administration or to cover departmental / government authority expenses and the areas of the State where the funding has / will be allocated.
- Demand that the Governments develop and communicate an alternative Forestry Plan with inputs from all stakeholders including regional community representatives, based on a sustainable and viable forestry industry, taking into account present and future resource requirements.
- Require the Governments gain firm and enforceable guarantees from **all** environmental groups not to disrupt legitimate forestry operations in Tasmania.

### **Tasmania's Regional Councils' Group**

Tasmania's Regional Councils' Group comprises the Councils from all parts of Tasmania. The 12 Councils are: Tasman, Derwent Valley, Break O'Day, Waratah Wynyard, West Coast, Brighton, Huon Valley, Southern Midlands, Dorset, Circular Head, Glamorgan Spring Bay and Central Highlands.

The group formed because the Councils considered they were being ignored, not only in the IGA negotiations, but also in important resource development decisions affecting regional Tasmania.

The Councils represent some 80 per cent of Tasmania's land area and probably a bigger percentage of the State's resources, but have not been consulted on important decisions affecting their regions and people.

### **General**

Tasmania's regional Councils want a full socio-economic study to be conducted into the impact on regional communities of the implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Tasmanian Forestry (IGA).

Councils also want full details of where the promised compensation funds will be provided and spent, and assurances that funds will be allocated to regional communities hurting from the downturn in the forest industry.

The Councils request that the Legislative Council Select Committee inquiry should demand the State Government undertake a full socio-economic study of the IGA impact.

The strong view of the Councils is that neither the Federal nor State Governments are aware of the suffering of regional communities as a result of downturn in local business activity, potential reduction in council services due to significant rate income losses, population drain and a general loss of confidence.

As well, the Government has not developed or communicated a view of what a sustainable Tasmanian forest industry will look like in the future and what part regional communities will play in that industry. Neither have they clearly stated where the compensation funding will be spent and how it will benefit regional communities.

Councils have no difficulty with contractors and others being compensated for the loss of their businesses, but other businesses such as local industry suppliers, retail and service providers have also been seriously impacted and have not received or promised compensation.

The loss in council rates from the changes to Forestry Tasmania and the proposed increase in forest reserves alone amounts to more than \$2 million a year, with no consideration of the consequences – increased rates or reduced services.

The agreement provides no guarantee that it will end all conflict in Tasmania's forest and this should be a pre-condition of any legislation. Watertight and enforceable guarantees must be provided by all environmental and Green political groups that the agreement will result in the cessation of all protest activity against legal and legitimate forestry activity.

However, Councils and regional communities have little confidence that this will be achieved. Even before the Tasmanian Forests Agreement 2012 legislation was debated in

the Legislative Council, the Wilderness Society called for 'buffer zones' where nothing could occur around the World Heritage Area and conservationists are now threatening to block mining activity in the so-called Tarkine region.

Regional communities hold the view that in reality, the State is being held to ransom and the environmental movement will not be satisfied until it has locked up all of Tasmania and destroyed the regional economy and associated communities.

The 12 Councils submit that it is time for the Tasmanian and Commonwealth Governments to stop pandering to the environmentalists and their Green political masters and take a stand for the vast majority of the Tasmanian community that favours sensible and balanced growth and development. The hardline activists and their supporters have virtually destroyed the Tasmanian forest industry and now emboldened by that success, are moving onto to attack mining. Will agriculture and aquaculture be next?

The Legislative Council can address this fear and remedy the situation by demanding a full socio-economic study of the IGA impact, requiring the State and Commonwealth Government to outline a future forest industry plan, compensation funding details and the other proposals outlined in this submission.

### **Recommendations**

As a pre-condition to passing any legislation to implement the Tasmanian Forests Agreement, the Legislative Councils should:

1. Require the Tasmanian and Commonwealth Governments conduct a comprehensive socio-economic study of the impact of the agreement on the Tasmanian economy and particularly on regional communities.
2. Require the Tasmanian Government to undertake a comprehensive community consultation program seeking the views of the broader community impacted by the agreement, rather than rely simply on the result of the negotiations between the peak environmental and forest industry groups.
3. Demand that the Tasmanian Government develop and implement a specific and effective economic development plan for regional communities impacted by the retraction of the forest industry.
4. Demand that the Commonwealth and State Governments provide full information on the allocation of the compensation funding, including details of who has / will receive funding, how much has been retained by government for administration or to cover departmental / government authority expenses, and provide all information the areas of the State where the funding has / will be allocated.
5. Demand that the Governments develop and communicate an alternative Forestry Plan with inputs from all stakeholders including regional community representatives, based on a sustainable and viable forestry industry, taking into account present and future

resource requirements.

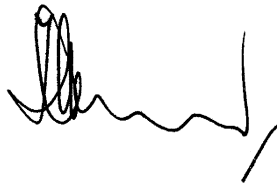
6. Require the Governments to gain firm and enforceable guarantees from **all** environmental groups not to disrupt legitimate, legal forestry operations in Tasmania.

**Contact**

For further information regarding this submission or evidence relating to the issues raised can be provided by contacting:

Regional Councils' Group spokesperson  
Dorset Mayor Barry Jarvis  
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Adviser to Regional Councils' Group  
Tony Harrison, Director, Bright Company  
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Signed on behalf of the Regional Councils' Group  
15 January 2013