

The Hon Paul Harriss MLC
Chairman
Legislative Council Select Committee on the
Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012
Parliament House
Hobart Tas 7000

tfacommittee@parliament.tas.gov.au

11 January 2013

Dear Chairman,

The Tasmanian Minerals Council is pleased to make a submission to your Select Committee consideration of the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012.

The Tasmanian Minerals Council counts among its members all of the major mines and mineral processing sites in Tasmania, along with mineral exploration companies, companies in the supply chain and individuals.

The Tasmanian Minerals Council is directed by a Board of Directors drawn from within the membership and maintains a secretariat in Hobart.

The organisation is an industry association which represents the views of members to government and the public and on policy or legislation and regulation which is relevant to the industry within the State.

The Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012

As noted in previous evidence to the Members of the Legislative Council, the Minerals Council is of the view that the Bill cannot be assessed properly if it is viewed solely from the perspective of forestry. Although forestry is its main focus, it will have impacts upon other users of public land, including the mineral exploration/mining industry. It seeks to create new reserves over a very large area of the State. The reserves will at a minimum elevate regulatory requirements for mineral exploration/mining projects. Depending upon their classification, they may also preclude these activities.

Prima facie, the Minerals Council believes Tasmania already has enough reserves. It is reasonable to reference the Regional Forest Agreement (Tasmania) of 1998. This exhaustive inquiry established a reserve system in Tasmania which was judged to be comprehensive, adequate and representative from a biodiversity perspective. For this reason, the reserve system is known as the CAR reserve system. We respectfully request the Members of the Legislative Council to consider why, with the introduction of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement Bill, this reserve system is no longer considered to be comprehensive, adequate and representative and whether there is any evidence to demonstrate why it is not.

In addition, the intent of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement Bill 2012, *inter alia*, is to classify these reserves sometime after the passage through Parliament (if it is approved by the Upper House) by a process determined by the Bill. In essence, Tasmanians will not know until the government makes a determination, which classifications will be assigned to the individual reserves.

Given that the intent of the Bill broadly is to preclude forestry activities on certain public lands and given that the “negotiations” which underpinned this Bill were carried out in secret by a limited number of interested parties, we believe it is a reasonable proposition that therefore, should the Bill be approved, its impacts should be limited as far as is reasonably practicable, to those parties.

Therefore, we ask the Members of the Upper House to consider an amendment to the Bill, should it be approved by the Upper House, to classify these reserves immediately as Regional Reserves. This category precludes forest activities but allows other economic activities subject to the statutory approvals process. We believe it to be fair to limit the restrictions to those who have agreed to them.

There have been many disturbing aspects to the off-agenda processes which have resulted in the drafting of this Bill and the Members of the Legislative Council will be aware of them. The minerals industry, for example, has no maps from the State Government to show where the reserves would be. We encourage the Members of the Legislative Council Select Committee to ask the Tasmanian Government why the Upper House has not been provided with the maps. At the time of writing, we believe the maps have not been provided to the Select Committee and they are material to the consideration of the Bill.

As an aside – but an important one when considering the broader ramifications of some of the themes in this Bill –the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012 has been presented on a platform of “durability”, which is a reference to the environmental groups ceasing protest action in the forests and in the markets. We believe it is up to the Members of the Upper House to determine if that concept has veracity. However, we remind the Members of the Select Committee that the mineral exploration and mining industries are also under attack from the environmental groups, particularly in the north-west, where some new projects are planned. We believe it is the intention of the environment groups to drive the mining industry out of Tasmania, by attacking new projects and therefore foreclosing the pipeline of renewal. If they are successful, the existing projects will expire over time as they are mined out or become uneconomic. At that point, Tasmania will no longer have a mining industry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Terry Long', written in a cursive style.

Terry Long
Chief Executive Officer