

16/1/2013

This is a submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee's review into the Tasmanian Forest Agreement Bill 2012 from the West Wellington Protection Group (WWPG).

Firstly we thank the members of the Legislative Council for the opportunity to make this submission. The WWPG respects the role of the Legislative Council in making important decisions affecting the well-being and prosperity of all Tasmanians.

The WWPG is a group of about 100 people mostly living in the Crabtree, Lucaston and Judbury areas. A further 1000 people support the aims of the WWPG through its Facebook page. The group was formed in response to Forestry Tasmania's plans to clearfell and burn coupes directly adjacent to the western boundary of Wellington Park. Many people in the WWPG had no previous involvement in forest protection, but strongly felt that industrial forestry was not appropriate in the West Wellington area.

West Wellington is a continuation of the Wellington Range, of which Mt Wellington is both the best known and highest peak. The West Wellington part of the range forms a mountainous barrier between the Huon and Derwent Valleys.

There are numerous reasons why the ordinary citizens of the WWPG felt it necessary to act to protect their local area from the proposed industrial forestry. These are discussed in detail in the attached *West Wellington Reserve Proposal*. Briefly they include: important habitat protection, including Tasmanian Devils and other threatened species; recognised high conservation values; forest regeneration issues; water quality and quantity; landscape and visibility of proposed clearfell areas; as well as heritage protection, local amenity and tourism potential.

In particular the implementation of the agreement would provide economic benefits for the local community through opportunities for eco-tourism development.

The WWPG has been involved with the Tasmanian Forest negotiations from the beginning through its membership of Environment Tasmania. We have regularly participated in the negotiations through our involvement with the Forest Reference Group which has regularly met since the beginning of negotiations to discuss the issues and advise Environment Tasmania and the other Environmental Non-Government Organisations (ENGOS) from the point of view of local or 'grass roots' organisations.

During this period of active participation in the negotiations the WWPG has been aware of the complex nature of the issues and has a full appreciation of the level of goodwill and compromise that has been necessary for all the parties to keep the process going through difficult times. The reason for this persistence has been the desire of all the stakeholders to reach an agreement and formulate a realistic plan to protect significant environmental assets, whilst also laying the foundation for a sustainable forest industry into the future, and most importantly, helping

communities and businesses to successfully cope with, and benefit from, mutually agreed necessary restructure.

The WWPG wishes to assure the members of the Legislative Council that it is fully committed to the agreement and its durability. Whilst we and many other local groups did not achieve the full area for protection we originally hoped for, we still support the agreement in the spirit of compromise that has been necessary for all stakeholders.

We believe that this agreement is different to any past agreements because it is the first time in Tasmanian history that industry stakeholders and community groups have voluntarily initiated negotiations with the express purpose of finding a solution to the serious problems besetting the forest industry and the ongoing disputes with environmental organisations. This agreement, unlike previous agreements was not initiated or imposed by governments. Community foundation is the unique strength of the agreement which will promote durable and beneficial outcomes for regional Tasmania if the Legislative Council allows it to pass into legislation.

The complex and often highly technical nature of the negotiations and eventual agreement mean that it is a finely balanced document. The WWPG stresses that the agreement is not durable if any part of it is altered by government or other outside agencies, as any amendment could critically upset the balance that has required so much work, commitment, time and significant compromise, by all the signatories to achieve.

The WWPG asks the members of the Legislative Council to pass the Tasmanian Forest Agreement legislation unamended, so that Federal government money can be released to assist businesses and communities, and allow the formal protection of some of the most iconic, unique and verified high conservation value forests in Tasmania. This is a unique opportunity that has unprecedented support and agreement from many different groups who all have the best interests of Tasmania, its people and its environment at the core of their commitment.

Yours Sincerely

Annette Cauchi

(for the West Wellington Protection Group)

PO Box 47

Huonville, 7109