

17 Minerva Drive
Perth 7300
16 January 2013

Mr. Stuart Wright
Committee Secretary
The Legislative Council
Parliament House
Hobart. 7000

Submission to the Select Committee Enquiry into the Tasmanian Forest Agreement Bill.

I wish to appear before the Committee to speak to the attached submission.

Yours sincerely
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Submission
to the
Legislative Council Enquiry
into the
Tasmanian Forest Agreement Bill
2012

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1. **Tasmania the odd one out. Why?**

Why is it necessary to lock up and away from productive use an **extra half million ha. of our forested public land?** The emphasis here is on the word extra – a word which is conveniently missed in most media reporting. Even input from interested parties usually misses this word and gives to some the impression that half a million ha. represents the majority of land conserved **in this state.**

Figures available show that already 41.6% of the total land mass in Tasmania is under reservation while other states including the Northern Territory (but excluding the A.C.T.) vary from 6.5% to 27.6% with an average of 14.29%.

Victoria 17.54% NSW 8.84% Queensland 6.65% but Tasmania 41.6%

(The ACT comprises only 235,813 ha. and does not rely on industry or production from natural resources for its economy and has a majority of its area protected under conservation).

Is Tasmania to continue being the sacrificial lamb on the altar of conservation?

The above figures from ref. C.P.A.D.(Commonwealth of Australia Protected Area Data) 2010.

Note. DPIPWE figures are even higher and other sources estimate as high as 48% in Tasmania.

2. **Lost Opportunity**

The question therefore is “Why do we need almost 50% of our land mass locked up when other states average 14.29%?” Obviously our State Government considers 50% as quite reasonable.

The Commonwealth Government and mainland states by creating extensive tracts of unused and uninhabited bushlands where birds can fly and animals roam free are using Tasmania for their cosy feeling about conservation. **At the same time other states take up the opportunities industry once provided for our state – opportunities that could be encouraged and developed here in the future.**

3. **Use it or lose it.**

We know that Bob Brown has stated publicly that all of Tasmania should be locked away from any productive use. So I ask every Member of the Legislative Council “What do you suggest is a reasonable percentage of Tasmania to be locked up?” Is it the average of the other states 14.29% or is it 25% or perhaps 30%? Sadly this Bill suggests 50% is needed and so continues to emphasise this state is

closed for business, not only now but closed to future opportunities for our kids and forest based industries that maybe we haven't yet dreamed about. Do we prefer to leave it to be eventually destroyed by rampant bushfires as global warming takes hold?

4. More cost and no return.

What is the cost of locking up this extra half a million ha.? Figures I am hearing put it at \$16 ha. p.a. but Government as yet is only offering \$9 ha. p.a. to Parks and or Forestry. Will that include new roading, maintenance of existing roads and bridges, fire abatement control and prevention? Will it take 2 or 3 years for people sitting in offices to assess what they have got to do, knowing that it is worth nothing and not returning one cent to the economy.

5. Private Forest Owners.

What of the private forests with industry opportunities decimated ? Will the Government pay private forest owners to look after their forests? I very much doubt it but the owners will still have to bear the cost of fire control and more importantly council rates - rates based on unrealistic assessed values for property returning nothing and a liability to its owners.

6. Industry succumbs.

I am very critical of the actions of the signatories to this agreement. The environmental groups are the big winners as was always expected.

Those groups show no responsibility for employment, for the economy or the future prosperity of the state- their relentless pressure on industry shows its true colours in this Bill. The industry signatories have succumbed to that relentless pressure in order to accept (perceived) short term security albeit at a much reduced industry involvement and with no long term guarantees of durability.

Timber Communities Australia caved in against the overwhelming vote of its Tasmanian membership. The decision of Tasmanian members was overruled by representatives from other states. Their attitude might have been entirely different had they been asked to lock up further large areas of their respective states resulting in 50% of their total land mass under conservation protection.

..(Some Legislative Council Members who support this so called Peace Deal have said the low turnout of Tasmanian members showed apathy.) That is incorrect. The only members notified of the meeting were those who had registered their email address with T.C.A. *(I had done this recently and then only by chance!)*

6. So..

It is my opinion that this Bill should be thrown out. It is up to the Legislative Council to stand up to the gutless State and Federal Governments which are captive to extreme destructive groups representing no more than 10-15% of Australians and are hellbent on destroying Tasmania's productive forest industries.

8. The Ball is in your Court.

I am asking Members of the Legislative Council, in the interest of Tasmania, for ourselves and future generations, to stand firmly against this bill but to encourage the Governments to

- (a) commence a process of determining a reasonable area to be protected in this state as a percentage of Tasmania's total land area. This might mean releasing some, adding some but it must be done scientifically by experts in the field.

- (b) introduce and enforce laws to protect disruption to industry.

Honourable Members: You have this one opportunity to do what is fair, to take a long hard look at the future of Tasmania's vitally important forest industry and cause it to be developed, promoted and enhanced. **The forests are a renewable resource.**

On the other hand the Bill before you will cause the forest industry to be reduced, become unimportant and generally sterile.

Posterity will be forever grateful if you stand firmly against the Bill before you.

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