



TASMANIAN TRAIL

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ACCESS TO STATE FOREST

Submission by The Tasmanian Trail Association Inc. to The Legislative Council's Government Administration Committee Inquiry into A Proposed Transition out of Public Native Forests.

INTRODUCTION.

The round table process has been dominated by a proposal to end, or at least drastically reduce timber harvesting in native forests that are State forest, with, it would appear, a transition to a situation where timber would be supplied from plantations. Public discussion concentrates on the economic effects of reduction in such harvesting to people, employing organisations, local communities etc. We have not seen any significant public discussion of the an issue that concerns this Association - the tenure of any land withdrawn from harvesting and, specifically, access to such land for uses other than timber harvesting.

We are making this submission to draw attention to the importance of continuing access to any land withdrawn from timber harvesting for recreational use. If this is denied, the continuing operation of The Tasmanian Trail, and no doubt other recreational and tourist uses, will suffer considerable damage.

BACKGROUND.

The Tasmanian Trail currently runs from Devonport to Dover, and is Tasmania's only long distance multi-use trail, being used by equestrians, riders of push bikes, and walkers. Volunteers are actively working on an extension from Dover to Southport.

The Tasmanian Trail Association is the voluntary organisation which looks after The Trail, which has been operating since 1987.

The Trail is a way-marked pathway that uses existing tracks and roads. The Association does not own (or even control) the pathway, the owners and managers of land of a wide range of tenures having given passage to travellers.

An indicative analysis of the tenures of the land traversed by The Trail has shown that it sits on the following tenures.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Private property | 41% |
| State forest | 25% |
| Land under the control of the HEC | 7% |
| Public roads | 23% |
| Other | <u>4%</u> |
| | 100% |

The Association attempts to site the Trail on routes that result in a good experience for users; a particular objective is to reduce the proportion of the Trail that runs along public roads, particularly those used by fast moving traffic and which have side tables not friendly to horses. But the lack of access to alternative routes continues to be an important impediment to success.

THE TRAIL AND FORESTRY TASMANIA.

Access.

The importance of access to State forest to The Tasmanian Trail is obvious from the statistics presented above. It is also worthwhile pointing out that the essential reason why there is not a significant entry for land under the control of The National Parks and Wildlife Service (there is a tiny entry in 'Other') is that riding, of horses or bikes, is not allowed in "National Parks".

Forestry Tasmania and The Tasmanian Trail Association signed a Community Forest Agreement in March 2000, which sets down arrangements for liaison, management planning, and co-operative activities. In practice, Forestry Tasmania people have actively co-operated with us, and, importantly, initiated actions for the benefit of The Trail and its users.

Financial support.

As well as in kind support, Forestry Tasmania has given grants in the past for the re-printing of our Guide Book and upgrading of our web site, with the new site being launched in the coming weeks.

THE FUTURE

Introduction.

When there have been outputs from the round table process we can begin to assess the consequences of them to The Trail. But we briefly state two policy objectives we believe should be accepted when deciding the new arrangements that are put in place following the withdrawal of any land from timber harvesting:

- 1) continuing access for users of The Trail to that land;
- 2) no reduction in the level of support we have experienced from Forestry Tasmania.

Access to land for a pathway for The Trail.

We are aware that some participants in the round table process believe the State forest status of areas of Crown Land withdrawn from timber harvesting should be revoked, and understand that the extent and location of such land is not yet decided.

We are not aware of any consideration having been given to providing continuing access for recreational uses of land taken out of timber production, especially if it is given a tenure which does not allow riding.

This issue is of vital importance to users of The Trail (and no doubt to other recreational users of State forest). We urge the Inquiry to, at the least, highlight its importance so that it is not over-looked as the round table process continues.

With current arrangements, our land tenure table shows the importance, in numerical terms, of State forest to The Trail. Beyond that, access to land that is currently State



forest has a qualitative value flowing from the tenure status of alternative routes for The Trail - there are two alternatives, public roads or private property. If access to land that is currently available for timber harvesting were to be denied to users of The Trail we could re-route the pathway to public roads, a fall back with retrograde effects for the experience of users. In theory we might be able to re-route on to private property, but this would be unlikely in practise, most private owners discouraging public use of their land.

Support from Forestry Tasmania.

As well as welcoming use of State forest for The Trail, Forestry Tasmania supports the operation of The Trail by actions in forest planning, on ground activities and with cash donations, as part of its community service obligations. Any reduction in this support would be very hard to replace.

CONCLUSION.

The Tasmanian Trail Association Inc. believes a strong case exists for the preservation of its access rights to State Forest and wishes to restate its policy objectives:

- 1) continuing access for users of The Trail to that land;
- 2) no reduction in the level of support we have experienced from Forestry Tasmania.



for

Ken Felton

President

Tasmanian Trail Association Inc.

