



## Legislative Council

# MEDIA RELEASE

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### **RELEASE OF COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE TASMANIAN FORESTS INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION GROUP 'REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN'**

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A Legislative Council Committee investigating the 'Report of the Chairman' Professor Jonathan West as part of the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement Independent Verification Group (IVG), has found that contrary to public commentary, Professor West was not critical of Forestry Tasmania in his report and that the report had been misinterpreted or misrepresented by organisations or individuals seeking to criticise the Tasmanian forest industry and the work of Forestry Tasmania.

The Committee report into the 'Report of the Chairman' was finalised earlier this week and was tabled in the Legislative Council today.

Inquiry Chairperson Jim Wilkinson MLC said 'The Chairman's report raised serious questions in relation to the forest certification standards associated with public native forest harvesting in Tasmania, given Professor West's finding about sustainable yields and that as such, it was appropriate for a Parliamentary Committee to investigate the report in further detail'

Mr Wilkinson said the Government Administration Committee had examined the key finding of the Report of the Chairman that found '*Tasmania's native forests (not including plantations) have been and continue to be harvested substantially above long-term sustainable yield, in respect of the key product segments to which they provide resources*'.

Mr Wilkinson said that the Committee had sought to clarify the content of the Chairman's report with Professor West directly during the course of the inquiry. Mr Wilkinson noted that during the course of his evidence, Professor West had raised a number of concerns in relation to the misuse or misrepresentation of information contained in his report, and the limitations of the IVG process generally.

"The Committee has made a number of findings based upon Professor West's evidence which has included the IVG verification process being restricted in the scope of the task by its terms of reference, that it inquired into the sustainable yield of the publicly owned native forest estate, but not the forest estate as a whole and that Professor West had questioned the timing of the establishment of the IVG verification process, and whether it should more appropriately have made a contribution at the commencement of the Intergovernment Agreement process" Mr Wilkinson stated.

Mr Wilkinson said that the Committee was very concerned that the Chairman's report had also been used as the basis of complaints made to the PEFC forest certification body that provides the forestry certification for Forestry Tasmania and had sought to clarify the outcome of the process that had been put in place by the PEFC to assess the complaints.

"The Committee considered the report completed by sustainability expert Professor Ian Ferguson in response to the complaints made to the PEFC and noted that he had dismissed the complaints in relation to the unsustainability of Forestry Tasmania's harvesting practices as unsubstantiated. Unfortunately, despite this independent assessment of the complaints that was completed by a world expert on sustainability, the adverse criticisms of Forestry Tasmania and the Tasmanian forest industry that relied upon Professor West's report does not appear to have been corrected for the public record. This is very disappointing in the circumstances and the Committee hopes that this report will contribute to correcting the public record accordingly".

Further information about the Inquiry including terms of reference, transcripts, published evidence and the Inquiry Report are available at:

<http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/GovAdminA.htm>

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**FURTHER INFORMATION: Jim Wilkinson MLC on 0419 349 251**