

## **Tasmanian Forests Reference Group of Signatories**

### **Report for the Tasmanian and Australian Governments in accordance with Clause 45 of the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement**

**13 June 2012**

In accordance with Clause 45 of the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement, the Signatories provide the following report for consideration by the Tasmanian and Australian Governments.

Over the last month the Signatory working group has been working intensively and in good spirit in an attempt to reach an agreement which optimises wood supply, conservation and community outcomes. Significant progress has been made but crucial challenges remain. The Signatories are aware of the deadlines established in the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement and submit this status report to request some flexibility by the Tasmanian and Australian Governments to allow crucial concluding work to be undertaken.

While agreement has not yet been reached, Signatories believe a durable agreement is still possible and request additional time ie until 23 July.

#### **Additional time requirements**

The Signatories have identified the following work and timelines as essential to increase the potential for agreement.

#### Additional modelling and investigations

A Signatory sub group is gathering additional and iterative data from both industry and environment perspectives. The work is examining options for closing the gap between the parties. This process requires time for Forestry Tasmania to conduct relevant modelling and to allow the iterative process to be completed. This work will be completed within the proposed timelines.

Extra time is also needed to enable the conclusion of important practical trials on wood supply specifications and alternative supply options. This will help to determine where there may be extra flexibility to assist delivery of mutually beneficial outcomes, and may assist in getting closer to meeting the conservation aspirations of environment groups and the wood supply needs of industry. In this context, the Signatories would like to emphasise the importance of Forestry Tasmania and the Forest Practices Authority continuing to provide full and cooperative assistance.

#### Ongoing work

The Signatories propose to keep working together on a number of different elements throughout the proposed extended timeframe. In particular, we will focus on five key components of the agreement: durability, wood supply, reserves, transition and an agreed vision for the future. Importantly, it is essential that each of these elements be progressed in order to ensure a durable outcome.

#### Signatory availability

In addition, three key members of the Signatory working group are unavailable for some periods of time over the next few weeks. Ongoing work can and will be undertaken during this time but the Signatories strongly believe that continuity of input will be important for the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

## **Issues arising from timing proposal**

### Legislation required by the Intergovernmental Agreement

The Signatories believe that the legislation should facilitate and be aligned with the outcomes of any agreement.

### Sawmiller exits

We propose that finalisation of this program should be extended beyond 30 June. The view of Signatories is that it should be commenced as soon as possible.

### Planning requirements

We are conscious that the extension in timeline may need to be facilitated through appropriate adjustments in Forestry Tasmania's statutory planning requirements, and the Conservation Agreement between the Tasmanian and Australian Governments and Forestry Tasmania.

### Ongoing access to external assistance

The Signatories have appreciated and found critical ongoing access to the assistance of the Independent Verification Group and consequentially Forestry Tasmania and would appreciate the maintenance of this to facilitate the ongoing work that is required.

More broadly, we have appreciated the ongoing assistance of both governments, specifically meeting room provision, briefings, access to additional data and the valuable executive support provided by the governments, which we would seek to continue as required.

## **Proposed timeframe**

In light of the issues raised above, it is the firm opinion of the Signatory working group that additional time is required in order to facilitate agreement on the complex issues involved.

Signatories will be in a position to report back to governments on whether agreement has been reached and provide details on Monday 23 July.

The Reference Group of Signatories is composed of:

Jim Adams representing *Timber Communities Australia Ltd*

Jane Calvert representing the *Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union*

Dr Hans Drielsma representing the *Australian Forest Products Association*

Terry Edwards representing the *Forest Industries Association of Tasmania*

Ken Padgett representing the *Australian Forest Contractors Association*

Ed Vincent representing the *Tasmanian Forest Contractors Association*

Dr Phill Pullinger representing *Environment Tasmania Inc*

Vica Bayley representing the *Wilderness Society Inc*

Don Henry representing the *Australian Conservation Foundation*

Fred Ralph representing the *Tasmanian Sawmillers Association*