

## Media release

(Response to calls by Tasmanian Liberal Party for a Tasmanian School of Forest Industries)



### **South African Foresters fill a skills gap in Tasmania and highlight an issue.**

Forestry Tasmania has recently recruited fifteen professional foresters from South Africa as it was unable to fill vacancies from within Australia.

National President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia, Dr Peter Volker, himself a Tasmanian, says this is due to ongoing challenges in encouraging young people to undertake professional forestry training at university and strong demand for foresters throughout Australia.

Dr Volker says this has been an ongoing issue for the past two decades. “Forestry, among a number of other science and engineering based professions, is facing a chronic shortage of graduates.”

“Not many people realise that forestry is a highly specialised profession, which requires a high level of training akin to engineering degrees. To maintain a functioning forestry degree program, universities need to employ a number of specialists to provide adequate training. Very small enrolment numbers have had a impact on these programs.”

To answer this problem collaboration between five Universities on a National Forestry Masters Program started last year ([www.forestry.org.au/masters](http://www.forestry.org.au/masters)). The Universities participating are Tasmania, Melbourne, Australian National, Queensland and Southern Cross. Dr Volker says this program is aimed at recruiting science graduates and people looking for a career change.

Dr Volker says forestry is a rewarding career that opens doors to many opportunities in forest industries, parks management and conservation. He said, “There is a lack of understanding of the many career pathways.” The demonising of forestry in the popular media and by some elements of the conservation movement serve to discourage people from taking up studies in this area.

Tasmania would be a great place to base a School of Forest Industries. Dr Volker believes that the definition of the industry could be broadened to include the conservation industry as well as the traditional forest industry. “All professional foresters are concerned with forest conservation, that is why we choose this noble profession,” he said. Such a school could cover all levels from skilled labour, through technical and professional training.

#### Contact

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