

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

Tasmania cuts Parks and Wildlife Service staff at the same time as Wilderness Society associates benefit from government largesse

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At a time of great uncertainty for the future of forest management in Tasmania, it has been revealed that the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service will suffer a skills drain as 20 jobs are axed to meet a \$4M budget cut (ABC News online 1 Nov 2011).

The National President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA), Dr Peter Volker asks, "How can Tasmania entertain a further addition of at least 430,000 ha to the State's reserve system, when the budget and staffing of the agency charged with the management of the current reserves is being reduced at an alarming rate?"

Dr Volker also said, "The Independent Verification Group under the Tasmanian Intergovernmental Forest Agreement (IGA) process appears to have become a gravy train for the Wilderness Society and its associates." Dr Volker says that former Wilderness Society Director, Professor Jonathan West already had appointed three people with close association to the Wilderness Society to the Independent Verification Group (IVG). "We now learn that the Wilderness Society's senior campaign coordinator, Virginia Young, climate change campaign leader, Sean Cadman and ANU academic, Judith Ajani have also been given paid jobs to participate in the IVG. It appears that credible independent forestry experts who have had previous involvement have now been excluded because they did not give answers which suited the ENGO agenda."

The Wilderness Society and the Greens Party have publicly announced that they want a further 572,000 ha of Tasmania's forests added to the reserve system. Dr Volker asserts that this is madness in the current economic, social and political environment in Tasmania.

Dr Volker says he feels for the professional managers and staff within the Parks and Wildlife Service who have struggled for years with inadequate funding and resources to manage one of the largest continuous Wilderness Areas and National Parks systems in the world. "It is a credit to them that their efforts have been recognised by UNESCO in maintaining the integrity of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area," he said. He added, "The same UNESCO reporting group also came to the conclusion that the forestry activities on the boundaries of the World heritage Area were well managed and of no threat to its integrity."

"This was a ringing endorsement of forest management inside and outside the conservation reserve system by a truly independent and objective assessment process. Why then are we locked into a process where the major participants are anything but independent and objective?" he said.

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