

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

ABN 48 083 197 586



Mr Roger Maguire
General Manager
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Yoogul Pty Ltd
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Dear Mr Maguire

I am writing to you in response to the irresponsible and ill-informed campaign by Markets for Change and other groups which are targeting Harvey Norman, and other retailers, support for Australian furniture manufactures, and the thousands of people employed by these firms.

The long time support Harvey Norman has demonstrated for the Australian furniture industry is a reflection of this company's environmental credentials and its commitment to Australian manufacturers, Australian jobs and the Buy Australian campaign.

Australian native forest managers are world leaders in sustainability and biodiversity conservation practices, and Tasmania is also at the forefront of developing and implementing world best practices.

Last financial year Australian native forests produced 944,300 cubic metres of high value native sawn hardwood, with significant volumes used by furniture manufactures. 140,000 was produced from Tasmanian forests. This timber was sourced from forests which are accredited under the *Australian Forestry Standard* (AFS) which is the only national forest certification system developed and managed by Standards Australia. The AFS is also recognised by the worlds largest voluntary certification scheme, the *Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification*.

In 2008 researchers from Yale University and the Australian National University independently compared environmental forest practice policies in Tasmania against the policies of 38 other jurisdictions from 20 countries worldwide and concluded that these forest practices "...to be comprehensive and amongst the most prescriptive in the world.". Assessments were based on five criteria: riparian zone management, clearcut size, road culverts and decommissioning, reforestation requirements and annual allowable cut. The effectiveness of these systems was also considered separately by the joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre-IUCN-ICOMOS mission report on the conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area which concluded that these area are well protected and managed.

The promotion of Australian and Tasmanian native timbers by Harvey Norman and other retailers is also helping to decrease the loss of forest and biodiversity values at a global level by reducing imports of similar timber products, many from countries which have yet to achieve the level of sustainability embraced by Australian forest managers.

Earlier this year, research undertaken by a masters student at the Australian National University, titled *Australian native forest management: sound or capricious policies*, found that by analysing Australian import trade statistics between 1994 and 2010, two clear trends emerged: domestic production of Australian native timbers has declined by 41%; and imports of tropical timbers from Asian countries has increased 57%.

This study estimated that 2.7 million hectares of Asian forests have been cleared to produce the range of forest products imported into Australia (excluding New Zealand and Japan). This area included an estimated 96,000 hectares of high conservation tropical forests as identified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. These forests were prime habitat for Orang-utans, Asian Elephants and other critically endangered species.

Unless Australian native forest timbers are readily available, imports from Asia will continue to increase. Consequently, I encourage Furniture Australia, Harvey Norman and other retailers to continue to support Australian forest products and promote their global environmental credentials that support sustainable practices in Australia and in doing so protect international biodiversity value.

I trust you will find this information beneficial.

I also extend an invitation to you and the Board of Furniture Australia to visit any of Australia's production native forests and examine first hand how their management is supporting biodiversity, are sustainable and are a critical part of our rural communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Volker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Volker FIFA RPF
President

27 July 2011