



The Institute of Foresters of Australia

ABN 48 083 197 586

The Hon. Julia Gillard, MP
Prime Minister of Australia
PO Box 6022, House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

6 December 2012

Dear Prime Minister

Re: IFA concerns regarding the Tasmanian Forest Agreement 2012

Public policy associated with public natural resource assets such as forests should be evidence-based, open and publicly transparent.

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (the IFA or “The Institute”) acknowledges the hard work done by the signatories in reaching the agreement on 22 November 2012. However the IFA has serious concerns about the Tasmanian and Australian Government implementation and legislation of the Agreement.

About the Institute of Foresters of Australia

The IFA supports conservation and sustainable use of Australia’s forests. The Institute is a professional body whose members are engaged in all branches of forest management, including conservation, forest industry, academia, research and sustainable natural resource management in Australia and overseas. Our members have professional expertise in ecosystem management, environmental protection, conservation, sustainable use of forest goods and services, ecosystem services, forest land development and valuation, forest science, and the planning and management of production and reserved forest lands.

IFA concerns about the Agreement

Significant concerns have been raised within the IFA around the future of forest management, forest conservation, forest industries and ecological sustainable development in Tasmania following the recent signing of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement 2012. Further, there is uncertainty as to the ongoing well-being of rural communities in Tasmania that are supported through the sustainable use of forest resources and associated industries based on wood and non-wood products.

The Tasmanian Forest Agreement 2012 places 504,012 hectares of public native forests, primarily from State Forests, into the reserve system. This translates to 1,676,000 hectares of nature conservation reserves with multiple-use State forests reduced to 469,000 hectares, of which the Institute estimates (based on proportional reduction) only about 270,000 hectares of public native forests being available for wood production. Therefore implementation of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement 2012 results in 88% of Tasmanian public native forests unavailable for wood production¹. This will result in a significant impact to the Tasmanian economy, reduced opportunities for a sustainable native forest industry in Tasmania, and will likely lead to perverse outcomes for private native forest management, ecological sustainable development, and the sustainable livelihood and well-being of rural communities in Tasmania.

Unlike the Regional Forest Agreement processes there is little documented evidence to demonstrate implementation and achievability of what has been agreed to by the signatories in the Agreement. In particular, detail is lacking around the impacts and outcomes of forest management, environmental, social and economic changes that will result from the agreement. The Institute is particularly concerned that the full economic and social impact to the Tasmanian economy and community of implementing the Tasmanian

¹Figures from *State of the Forests Tasmania*, tables 1.1.a and 2.1.a.



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Forest Agreement 2012 will be high and that these impacts have not been rigorously evaluated and publicly reported before commencing agreement implementation and legislative instruments. The Institute is concerned about government implementation of an agreement from a small select group of stakeholders covering a public asset where the short term and long term impacts are unknown or are left to be worked out afterwards.

Ecological sustainable development and ecological sustainable forest management are the responsibility of government leaders not a select group of stakeholders. The IFA believes that the signatories have reached a compromise agreement without looking at the holistic issues of ecological sustainable development and ecological sustainable forest management for the benefit of society; in this case Tasmanian society.

Recommendations

Using the Regional Forest Agreement forest estate and arrangements as a basis of comparison, the IFA calls for the following recommendations to be reviewed and publicly reported by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments before legislative implementation of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement 2012:

- a comprehensive assessment of the economic, social and environmental impact and consequences of implementing the new agreement with a focus on the Tasmanian economy, rural community well-being, and impacts on local governments, private native forest owners and other rural industry sectors;
- identification of perverse outcomes (domestically and international) of implementing the new agreement on conservation and sustainable use of forest resources including application of a revised Codes of Forest Practices, sustainable yield of forest products and sustainable forest management on public and private lands;
- proof of capacity to manage, monitor and protect conservation values in perpetuity in an increased reserve system - in particular the capacity and capability of controlling wildfire during fire seasons;
- an explanation into how implementing the new agreement will lead to better ecological sustainable development and sustainable forest management outcomes compared to the current forest estate and management arrangements of the Regional Forest Agreement and what have been the trade-offs between conservation and sustainable use of forest goods and services; and
- an Australian Government investigation into how Section 99 of The Constitution issues are to be addressed given an apparent or likely discrimination in terms of trade, commerce and revenue to Tasmania, or parts thereof, in legislating and regulating the new agreement.

Finally, the Institute renews its commitment and enthusiasm to be a key stakeholder in the Tasmanian Forest Agreement process as Australia's only professional body representing sustainable forest management.

Yours faithfully

Rob de Fegely, IFA President

cc Lara Giddings, Premier of Tasmania and members of Australian and Tasmanian Parliaments