



**tasmanian conservation trust inc**

## **Media Release**

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### **Weakening of State Forest Clearing Controls will give Minister for Forests more power and result in more forest communities becoming threatened**

The state government today announced that it had approved changes to the Tasmanian Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy (Native Forests Policy) which the TCT warns will accelerate the rate of clearing, push less common forest communities to becoming threatened and disadvantage the majority of smaller farm owners over large corporate farmers.

The government has changed the Native Forests Policy to allow clearing on private land to exceed the 40 ha per property per year limit and exceed regional limits in respect to less common forest communities. These limits can now be exceeded at the discretion of the Forests Minister where he believes there is a 'substantial public benefit'.

"The result of the government's changes will be an acceleration of the rate of clearing and some less common forest communities becoming threatened", said TCT Director Peter McGlone.

"We acknowledge that the state government has retained the overall statewide cap on clearing of native forest, but it is vital to have strict limits at a property and bioregional level because some parts of the state are more heavily impacted by past clearing."

Although the government has attempted to put in place a process to assess applications from land owners who want to exceed property and regional clearing limits, the power to do this has been taken away from the independent Forest Practices Authority and is now in the hands of the Forests Minister.

"We have little confidence that the Forests Minister will demonstrate the appropriate independence to be able to balance conservation and development interests when assessing clearing applications," Mr McGlone continued.

"These changes are clearly motivated by the government's desire to assist a few larger 'corporate farming interests' who want to clear large areas of native forest quickly and who have recently been refused approvals."

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"We are concerned that the weakening of the controls will result in a few big properties clearing large areas and we will rapidly reach the statewide or bioregional limits – and every other land owner misses out.

"This will mean that most land owners will not have the same economic opportunities as the bigger corporate farmers and this may push some into attempting illegal clearing," Mr McGlone concluded.

**Further Information:**

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