



tasmanian conservation trust inc

Media Release

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TCT RESPONSE TO THE FORESTS STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AGREEMENT

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust today said that the Forests Statement of Principles Agreement promises a great outcome for protection of high conservation value forests in wilderness areas but is concerned that it is not a complete plan for conservation of forests. In particular it fails to address the need for protection of forests for biodiversity – found primarily on private land.

TCT Director Peter McGlone acknowledges that the agreement shows that considerable common ground exists between the industry and conservationists and this is a good basis for further negotiation. The TCT also acknowledges that the agreement promises to protect up to 600,000 hectares of mainly wilderness forests on public land and the TCT strongly supports this.

“The agreement presented to the Premier David Bartlett yesterday is not a complete plan for the conservation of Tasmania’s forests and there a number of key issues yet to be addressed” said Mr McGlone. “For this reason the TCT has decided not to endorse the agreement but we hope that it can be built on and improved.”

“As well as not delivering on biodiversity conservation on private land, the agreement fails to address some concerns regarding a pulp mill if that mill is to be located in the Tamar Valley, reform of Forestry Tasmania and the need to strengthen the Parks and Wildlife Service’s capacity to manage even more reserves (likely to be more than 50% of the state). It also does not include a scientifically based process for a transition out of disputed forests.”

“The current agreement does, however, hold out the prospect that some of these issues can be resolved during the implementation phase”

Among the issues of concern to the TCT are:

Private land biodiversity

Private land has not been given sufficient attention in the Agreement and yet private forests contain the majority of unprotected threatened species habitat, threatened forest types and freshwater ecosystems.

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Nearly 40% of Tasmania's unreserved forests are found on private land. The agreement fails to identify the crucial importance of private land for biodiversity conservation or commit to specific conservation strategies.

"There is a real risk that sufficient funding will not be obtained to achieve conservation outcomes on private land," said Mr McGlone.

Gunns' Bell Bay pulp mill

The TCT believes that opportunities were missed to deliver a forests deal which addressed concerns about Gunns' Bell Bay pulp mill.

"Should funding be provided to Gunns as a part of this deal, it must be on the condition that Gunns addresses concerns regarding the location and type of its proposed pulp mill and the Pulp Mill Assessment Act is revoked," Mr McGlone said.

Reform of Forestry Tasmania and reserve management agency

The reform of Forestry Tasmania, to remove their dominance of public forest management must also be part of the final outcome. The Parks and Wildlife Service needs to be reformed and better resourced to ensure they are better positioned to protect and manage the more than 50% of Tasmania which will be in reserves.

Transition of logging out of public native forests

TCT's view is that if logging is to be halted across all State Forest it must be done on the basis of a scientific identification of high conservation value forests and not an arbitrary opposition to 'commodity-scale logging'.

"A better basis for negotiations would be to seek a transition out of high conservation value public forests while leaving open the possibility of continued FSC certified logging of regrowth forest for high value products.

"Negotiating a complete transition out of public native forests will be a very difficult task and the TCT believes it has a role to play in the transition process because of its past work and experience with public and private landholders," Mr McGlone said.

What the TCT will do next

The TCT has more than 30 years experience in campaigning for Tasmania's forests and remains willing to contribute to the next stage of the process to protect Tasmania's forests.

The TCT welcomes the State Government's promise of broad community consultation and will be providing the State Government with a detailed critique of the agreement and make suggestions to make it a more complete and achievable plan for the future of Tasmania's forests.

Further information:

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