



tasmanian conservation trust inc

Letter to the editor
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Kelty's Claytons moratorium not the worst of it

The TCT supports the Huon Valley Environment Centre's withdrawal from the Forests Statement of Principles (FSoP) discussions, because of the state government's failure to deliver a true moratorium to stop logging of high conservation value forests (HCVF).

The TCT did not endorse the FSoP in October 2010 for a range of reasons, including that it ignored the need for conservation of biodiversity rich forests on private land and it did not exclude Gunns Tamar Valley pulp mill proposal. One positive in the FSoP was that it promised the protection of many HCVFs in wilderness areas, however this hope seems to be more unrealistic than ever.

Bill Kelty's 11 March statement recommended a Claytons moratorium for six months, allowing Forestry Tasmania (FT) to continue logging in HCVF, including many wilderness areas. In the absence of a state government commitment, the Kelty statement fails to guarantee that FT will permanently protect a single hectare of forests after six months. No deal will deliver permanent protection unless the state government instructs FT, in writing, to do so (as required by law). The government's only instructions to FT, Bryan Green's 9 March letter, merely orders them to talk with conservation groups about a moratorium.

Minister Green's letter makes it perfectly clear that FT is not obliged to reserve any forests or cease logging in any HCVF, is not bound by Kelty's six-month deadline and FT is left to decide which forests are HCV.

So, what is the state government committed to? The letter to FT repeated its long-held commitment to maintain wood supply to industry and not to force buy-backs of licences. It also supports Gunns' Tamar Valley pulp mill.

It appears that the state government will consider protection of forests only if a logging company wants to sell back their wood licences, and Gunns is the only logging company considering selling its licences. So the 'forests for the pulp mill' is the only deal on offer by the government.

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Given the incomplete and corrupted process that lead to Gunns pulp mill approval by the state government, the TCT opposes such a deal and urges all other conservation groups to explicitly oppose it. Instead, we should follow the Huon Valley Environment Centre's lead and call on the state government to make a meaningful commitment to protect HCVF while also seeking amendment of the FSoP to state that Gunns Tamar Valley pulp mill is not supported.

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