

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

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IFA COMMENT ON TASMANIAN NEGOTIATING PRINCIPLES

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) – Tasmanian Division, has considered the signed “Tasmanian Forests Statement of Principles to Lead to an Agreement”. The IFA understand the principles are seen as a starting point for negotiations, and as such provide a basis for final agreement. As Australia’s only representative professional forest management organisation, the IFA is committed to working with all parties to achieve an outcome that strengthens the communities support for forestry, builds a lasting resolution to differences, and supports ongoing forest based industries and communities in Tasmania. As a preliminary position statement we have considered the Principles that we believe we can provide comment on.

To access IFA Policy Statements visit: <http://www.forestry.org.au/ifa/g/g0-ifa.asp>

IFA COMMENT ON RELEVANT PRINCIPLES

General Wood Supply

Native Forest Wood Supply

IFA Comment

The IFA has developed robust native forest wood supply policies and support their use as a basis for negotiation. Native forest wood supply should not be mandated by legislation. The public forest manager must have flexibility to respond to changing technology, environmental requirements, social attitudes and market conditions. Wood supply agreements should be the mechanism through which industry has security of supply.

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High Conservation Value (HCV) Forests

Immediately protect, maintain and enhance High Conservation Value Forests identified by ENGO’s on public land.

IFA Comment

The IFA believes that the scientific value of forests must be assessed by people with professional qualifications in forest management. Any determination must be by an independent process and meet an international definition which is agreed to at the national level. The IFA supports the establishment of a panel of international forest management and conservation experts (including professional foresters) to make recommendations on what is HCV. This process should also consider how well forest communities deemed HCVF outside reserve, are already well represented and protected in current reserves, and how these values are equally assessed against community and economic values. A process for determination of HCV should be overseen by the federal government as the implications of such approach have national application.

Transition

Transition the commodity (non specialty) forest industry out of public native forests into suitable plantations through a negotiated plan and timeline.

IFA Comment

It is not clear what the meaning of commodity (non specialty) forest industry means. On a global scale the eucalypt timber industry in Australia produces highly specialised, unique forest products. It can be demonstrated that plantations can only replace some timber products from native forests in a very restricted set of circumstances. Experience from a similar strategy adopted in Queensland has not been successful in substituting plantation timber for native forest sources. Tasmanian native timbers are unique and provide specialist products which are unable to be replicated under plantation management regimes. Commodity bi-products are a consequence of management and manufacture, and as such should be determined by market drivers. There is no need to include this in the framework – other than to allow the market to determine this direction.

Industry

Create a strong sustainable timber industry including the development of a range of plantation based timber processing facilities including a pulp mill. There will need to be stakeholder consultation and engagement with the proponent, ENGO's and the community.

IFA Comment

This should be market driven and as such Governments and ENGO's should not be determinants of outcomes.

Specialty Timbers

Provide for ongoing specialty timber supply including eucalypt for our Tasmanian high value furniture and craft industries through a negotiated plan and timeline.

IFA Comment

Supply of Specialty Timbers at a volume and price that supports existing and new businesses and craft industries is very important and needs to be integrated into any future forest supply plans.

Plantations

Support sustainable and socially acceptable plantations including agreed reforms and new agro-forestry outcomes, including pursuing certification.

IFA Comment

The development of integrated farm and agricultural based plantation developments must provide financial returns for land managers based on diverse markets and certainty. Need to consider the structural and social issues. Eg: Plantations on 10% of farms- how to fund and ownership of trees. The true cost of sawlog from plantation sources must be considered.

Private Forests

Encourage and support, but not mandate, private forest owners to: seek assistance for certification; and protect, maintain and enhance high conservation value forests on their properties.

IFA Comment

The IFA note that the agreement is focused on public native forest management and as such private forests should be excluded from any principles or negotiations. Where the community determines that private land requires reservation to meet conservation, landscape or other community service benefits, the State should be required to either purchase the land in question at fair market rates or compensate the landowner for loss of asset value. Such land should not be subject to local government rates.

Communities Impacted

Support impacted rural and regional communities, workers, contractors and businesses, through a range of economic development, financial assistance, compensation and retraining measures.

IFA Comment

The IFA consider that the Tasmanian social fabric incorporates forestry, forest based businesses, employees and the forest dependent communities. Consequently, a full socio-economic study is required to fully assess the impacts associated with implementing the agreement, and these impacts must be mitigated so as to minimise adverse outcomes. This would not be necessary if there had been a well structured national and complimentary State forest policy. In addition, the ongoing political interference in forest management, especially resource allocation and pricing has been shown to be a constraint on sensible decision making. Subsidies and compensation packages may be necessary to fix short term problems, but the long term consequences need to be taken into account. We are part of the community!

Community Engagement

Engage and involve the broad Tasmanian community in the development and implementation of a durable solution to the Tasmanian forest conflict.

IFA Comment

A well enunciated forest policy is the only solution. There is only a conflict in the eyes of a vocal minority. Successive inquiries, independent reports have generally supported current forest practices and regulatory structures. The Tasmanian community must be fully engaged, provided with transparent, accurate, factual information, and then given the opportunity to determine what level of the agreement is acceptable and to be implemented. All parties must abide by this outcome.

Planning

Develop a fully-funded, independent, scientifically-led landscape conservation, restoration and integrated-catchment management program, and associated governance and regulatory improvements.

IFA Comment

The IFA recognise the benefits of an integrated catchment management approach can only be achieved where controls over all urban, industrial, agricultural and natural land use practices are regulated within a level field, and as such support an independent review to

ensure best practice are being implemented across all tenures. There should be acceptance that some public land tenure may need to change.

Government

Reform and support government agencies, policies and legislation as necessary for the implementation of an agreement associated with these Principles.

IFA Comment

In terms of implementation of forest science, Tasmania is well served. The structures to support this must be maintained.

Climate Change

Seek funding for improving carbon outcomes as a result of delivering these Principles.

IFA Comment

Support the principles of the IPCC and the Garnaut Report, and reputable, science based international climate mitigation initiatives, which recognise the benefits of integrating active forest management and forest products in mitigating climate change. If market mechanisms are in place at national and international level there is no need for public funding.

Sustainability needs to be considered in terms of “global accountability”, and not just from a local viewpoint. Locking up forests in Tasmania for perceived carbon credits, and importing products from overseas, does not fit well with global sustainability of our resources. In addition, many of these countries we are importing from, have poor forest management practices, and we are, by default, condoning those.

Biomass

In Tasmania, only permit plantation forest processing and plantation harvesting residues to be used as biomass for RECs.

IFA Comment

Recognise international initiatives in the use of biomass from sustainable resources.

Certification

Encourage Forestry Tasmania to firstly obtain Controlled Wood accreditation on delivery of the moratorium, secondly, obtain full FSC certification on resolution of an FSC National Standard and once an agreement based on these Principles has been finalised.

IFA Comment

The IFA has a robust policy on voluntary certification and consider such initiatives should remain market driven and not mandated by government.

