



Forestry Tasmania

GROWING OUR FUTURE

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Your Ref:

Our File:

12 June 2008

Review of the Planning System
GPO Box 1691
HOBART 7001

Dear Sir/Madam

Review of Planning System of Tasmania

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to the Review of Planning System of Tasmania. Whilst planning for forestry operations is not specifically addressed in the terms of reference for the inquiry, it may be raised by other parties and it is in that context Forestry Tasmania would like to provide a submission. It is noted that the first dot point in 1a of the Terms of Reference states:

“reviewing the allocation of roles and functions in the planning system between State Ministers and agencies, including the new Environment Protection Agency, the RPDC and RMPAT.”

Current strategic planning requirements on State forest

Planning on State forest in Tasmania is regulated through the Forestry Act (1920). It is expressed through the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) (1997) (and subsequent Community Forest Agreement, 2005), the zoning of State forest into production and protection forest (Management Decision Classification system) and the Forest Management Plan. The development of the Forest Management Plan is a statutory process and requires three public consultations prior to approval by the Minister. These levels of strategic planning are publicly reported upon either annually or five-yearly.

Planning requirements on State forest are incorporated into Forestry Tasmania's Environmental Management System (certified to ISO 14001 and subject to external audit). Forestry Tasmania is also certified against the internationally recognised Australian Forestry Standard (AS 4708) which requires the delivery of good environmental, social and economic outcomes and is subject to regular external audit.

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Current operational planning on State forest

Planning for forestry operations on State forest must comply with the requirements of the *Forest Practices Act (1985)* as well as with Forestry Tasmania's internal policies and systems. Other infrastructure, such as tourism or timber processing developments, are subject to planning and approvals under the *Land Use Planning and Approval Act (1993)*. This dual approach to planning activities on State forest works well and significant change would be disruptive and most likely lead to inefficiencies and inconsistencies.

In support for maintaining the allocation of roles and functions in the planning system for State forest

Forestry Tasmania considers that the forest practices legislation, policies and processes that are currently implemented in Tasmania are second to none in Australia. No other agricultural activity or renewable resource industry has the same level of regulation exercised over it. There are a number of positive features about the Tasmanian forest practices system and these include:

- The Forest Practices Authority (FPA) is an independent agency that oversees operational forestry planning, audits forestry operations and publicly reports on forestry operational performance.
- The FPA operates across tenures and across the State ensuring there is consistency and certainty in the approach to and implementation of forest operations – important for forest operatives who work in a number of geographic locations.
- The accreditation of Forest Practices Officers (FPO), who must have at least 5 years forestry experience and undergo forest practices training. Only accredited FPOs can approve Forest Practices Plans. FPOs can also issue notices to comply to forest operatives and sign off on compliance when a forestry operations has been completed.
- The FPA employs specialist scientists in the areas of wildlife and plant ecology, soil and water science, geoconservation, landscape management and cultural heritage to advise forest planners and FPOs on the appropriate prescriptions to include in Forest Practices Plans.
- The forest practices system is subject to periodic review to ensure continuous improvement in forest management practices.
- The forest practices system has a public appeals mechanism external to the FPA through the Resource Management and Planning Appeals Tribunal.
- Annual Reports of the Forest Practices Authority indicate that there are about 1,000 Forest Practices Plans approved annually, of which about 45% are on State forest.

Currently, local government does not have the resources or specialist forestry expertise to undertake planning and approvals. If local government had this responsibility there would be a high likelihood that inconsistencies would develop due to varying interpretations of forest management requirements by different Councils. This would lead to an increase in operational difficulties for forest contractors and the potential for an increase in the number

of breaches of requirements. The current forest practices system provides a consistent approach and is already in place. Local government should recognise the Forest Practices Code (2000) as the basic requirement, and should acknowledge these standards in Planning Schemes.

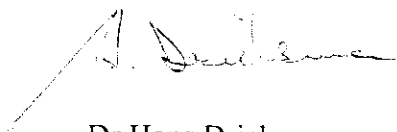
In recent years, Forestry Tasmania has contributed to the ongoing review of individual local government planning schemes to ensure that forest management requirements, particularly on public land, are recognised appropriately within each planning scheme. By participating in this process, Forestry Tasmania has encountered a number of examples in different local government areas of the potential to develop inconsistencies in both strategic and operational planning in the development of new local government planning schemes. These inconsistencies included:

- Local government zoning on State forest that was inconsistent with zoning under existing statutory agreements and Forest Management Plans under the Forestry Act, 1920.
- At the operational level, local government areas are introducing new prescriptions for streamside protection that are inconsistent with prescriptions, in use across all tenures under the Forest Practices Act (1985).
- Landscape vista protection requirements at a broad scale without consideration of the implications of the proposed measures or taking into account existing landscape planning processes under the Forest Practices Act (1985).

Conclusion

Forestry Tasmania strongly supports maintaining the integrity of the Tasmanian forest practices system, administered by the Forest Practices Authority. It is directed at consistent application across tenure and is well understood by the forest industry. Local government should recognise the Forest Practices Code as the basic operational requirement for forestry on all tenures and the strategic planning requirements for State forest (outlined in the RFA and *Forestry Act 1920*), particularly with regard to zoning.

Yours sincerely



Dr Hans Drielsma
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