

**JOINT AUSTRALIAN AND TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT FOR THE
PERIOD 2007-2012**

April 2016

PREFACE

The Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Tasmania (the Parties) entered into the [Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement](#) on 8 November 1997.

The Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement is a 20-year plan that balances the environmental, social and economic values of forests within Tasmania. It establishes the framework for the sustainable management of Tasmania's forests for a variety of values and uses, a forest reserve system which is Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) and the development of sustainable native forest-based wood and wood products industries.

The Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement was developed as part of a series of Regional Forest Agreements between the Commonwealth of Australia and the governments of New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia. While all Regional Forest Agreements have their own unique elements, they were all developed in accordance with a commitment in the [National Forest Policy Statement \(1992\)](#).

An important element of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement is its requirements for regular five-yearly reviews of its performance. Five-yearly reviews were conducted in 2002 (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2002) and 2007 (Ramsay 2008). The third five-yearly review covered the period July 2007 to June 2012.

[Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 2007-2012](#) (Implementation Report) was released in March 2015 by Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Australian Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture (2013-2015), and the Hon. Paul Harriss, Tasmanian Minister for Resources (2014-2016), and public submissions were invited. The opportunity to comment on the third five-yearly review was further advertised in the Australian (18 April 2015), Burnie Advocate (18 April 2015), Hobart Mercury (18 April 2015), Launceston Examiner (18 April 2015), Koori Mail (22 April 2015) and Tasmanian Country (24 April 2015), and on Facebook (20 April 2015 – 4 May 2015).

An Independent Reviewer, Dr Glen Kile AM FTSE, was appointed by the Parties to review the Implementation Report and the public submissions received. The Independent Reviewer provided [Review of the Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement for the Period 2007-2012](#) (Independent Review) for consideration by the Parties, and this report was tabled in the Australian Parliament on 2 December 2015. This document is the formal response by the Parties to the 16 recommendations in the Independent Review, and concludes the third five-yearly review of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement.

Issues raised in the public comment period, the Independent Review and this response, are key inputs to the process for extending the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement. The process to negotiate an extended agreement and the relationship between the review and extension processes are outlined in the [Scoping Agreement for the Review of Progress with Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement](#) and on the Tasmanian Government Department of State Growth's [website](#).

The Parties remain committed to the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement as the appropriate mechanism to balance the environmental, social and economic values of forests within Tasmania, and will work cooperatively to ensure its extension.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1 – THE PARTIES REVIEW OUTSTANDING COMMITMENTS IN RELATION TO RESERVE ESTABLISHMENT AND DETERMINE THOSE THAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A RENEWED/EXTENDED TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Joint Government Response

The Parties agree to review outstanding commitments in relation to reserve establishment and will consider those that should be included in the Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System, which is a fundamental element of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement.

The Parties note the substantial area of Tasmania contained within its Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System, which has increased from 44.1 per cent of the total land area of Tasmania in 2007-08 to 50.1 per cent in 2015-16. Any outstanding commitments from previous reviews will be considered in this context.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – THE STATE CONSIDERS CONTINUING IMPROVEMENTS TO TRANSPARENCY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST PRACTICES PLANS AND THE ACCESSIBILITY TO NON-PRIVATE INFORMATION FOR THESE PLANS

Joint Government Response

The Parties agree that transparency and access to information is important in the management of forests on both public and private land.

Forest Practices Plans are developed by applicants in accordance with the *Forest Practices Act 1985* (Tas), the Forest Practices Regulations 2007, the Forest Practices Code and associated planning tools. This information, and the procedures used by forest planners and forest practices officers, are available on the Forest Practices Authority [website](#).

The State will continue to provide access to Forest Practices Plans through the Forest Practices Authority, and will continue to refer enquiries on the preparation of draft documents and background material directly to Forest Practices Plan applicants.

The State will continue to seek opportunities to improve transparency in the development of Forest Practices Plans following consultation with the Forest Practices Authority Board and the Forest Practices Advisory Council.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – THE STATE REASSESS THE PROCESS AND TIMEFRAME FOR COMPLETING THE MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR ROCKY CAPE, MOUNT WILLIAM AND SAVAGE RIVER NATIONAL PARKS WITH A VIEW TO THEIR COMPLETION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Joint Government Response

The State commits to progressing appropriate management planning arrangements for Rocky Cape National Park, Mount William National Park and Savage River National Park.

The State is working with the Aboriginal Heritage Council to progress an agreed approach to management planning for national parks and reserves, including Rocky Cape National Park and Mount William National Park, which are of significant interest to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

The State is committed to finalising the Savage River National Park Management Plan. A [draft plan](#) has been prepared.

RECOMMENDATION 4 – THE PARTIES SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY IN MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND FOREST STEWARDSHIP DURING THE TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT RENEWAL/EXTENSION PROCESS

Joint Government Response

The Parties are committed to meaningful consultation on forest management, including consultation with Aboriginal community members who have relevant interests.

The Parties invited public comments during the third five-yearly review of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement to inform the extension process. Submissions were sought from the Aboriginal community through advertising in the Koori Mail (22 April 2015) and other media outlets.

The State has improved its consultation processes with the Aboriginal community in forest management planning and stewardship since the third five-yearly review reporting period (2007 – 2012). The Forest Practices Authority released the *Resource guide for managing cultural heritage in wood production forests* in 2012, and the more recent *Procedures for Managing Aboriginal Cultural Heritage when preparing Forest Practices Plans*, to provide specific guidance on the process to be undertaken if Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or suspected during forest management planning processes. Forest Practices Officer training courses covering Aboriginal cultural awareness and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage have been instigated in 2015, with significant input from Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and delivery by members of the Aboriginal community.

The establishment of the Interim Aboriginal Heritage Council in 2012 and its expansion as the Aboriginal Heritage Council in 2015 provides a formal mechanism for broad-based consultation with Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations and groups on relevant issues.

RECOMMENDATION 5 – THE STATE BUILDS ON ITS EXISTING MONITORING FRAMEWORK TO DEVELOP A LONG-TERM FOREST CONDITION MONITORING SYSTEM ACROSS ALL FOREST TENURES TO ASSESS CHANGES IN ECOSYSTEM HEALTH AND VITALITY

Joint Government Response

The Parties recognise that a state-wide forest monitoring information system would be a valuable tool to assess and monitor changes in ecosystem health and vitality.

Through the Australian and Tasmanian State of the Forests Report series, the Parties identify the scale and impact on forest health from a variety of processes and agents, both natural and human-induced.

The State's public forest managers have a range of monitoring systems that cover different aspects of the forest estate. The information from these systems is used to inform adaptive management and continuous improvement approaches to the management of Tasmanian forests.

The State agrees to consider implementing a state-wide forest monitoring information system. This would likely require greater integration of existing systems and the development of new tools to assist in the long-term monitoring of forest condition and biodiversity, including threatened species.

RECOMMENDATION 6 – THE PARTIES CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE MECHANISMS IN PLACE TO RESEARCH, EVALUATE AND COMMUNICATE OUTCOMES FOR THE PROTECTION OF THREATENED SPECIES AND BIODIVERSITY ACROSS ALL FOREST TENURES

Joint Government Response

The Parties recognise that improved research, evaluation and communication mechanisms can contribute to improved outcomes for threatened species and biodiversity, and agree to continue to improve these mechanisms as part of an adaptive management framework. Opportunities for outcomes focused monitoring and reporting will be considered as part of the extension process.

The Parties are committed to protecting and improving the conservation of Tasmania’s threatened species and will continue to work together in the development and implementation of conservation advices and recovery plans. In signing the Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of a common assessment method for the listing of threatened species and ecological communities, the Parties have committed to improving cross-jurisdictional consistency in the assessment of threatened species status.

The Threatened Species Commissioner, appointed by the Commonwealth Government, is also working collaboratively with all levels of government, scientists, the non-profit sector, industry and the community to deliver better outcomes for threatened species across all tenures. The Commissioner is currently focused on achieving the targets set out in Australia’s first [Threatened Species Strategy](#).

The State continues to prepare listing statements and notesheets for threatened species, and makes this information widely available through the [Threatened Species Link](#)—a website designed to provide advice on how to manage threatened species in Tasmania.

The status, extent and required conservation measures for threatened fauna species are regularly reviewed by the State, in accordance with the [Agreed Procedures for the Management of Threatened Species under the Forest Practices System](#). These measures are made available through the [Threatened Fauna Adviser](#)—a decision-support system to advise on the management of threatened fauna in wood production forests in Tasmania. An equivalent adaptive management tool is being developed by the Forest Practices Authority for threatened flora.

RECOMMENDATION 7 – THE PARTIES CONSIDER THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RESOURCED AND PRIORITISED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN AS PART OF THE TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT RENEWAL/EXTENSION

Joint Government Response

The Parties support investment in research and development. The need to include a resourced and prioritised Research and Development Plan will be considered as part of the extension process to the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement.

The Parties note that investment in Australian forestry and forest product related research and development has reduced in recent years. The Parties consider that the prioritisation and coordination of applied forest and wood product related research and development should be led by industry. Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) is the industry-owned research and development corporation that coordinates private and government investment in the forest and wood products industry, with prioritisation of applied research and development through a consultative process. The Commonwealth provides matching funding to FWPA for their spending on eligible research and development activities. In 2014-15, the Commonwealth provided \$3.3 million.

The State's public forest managers have a range of monitoring systems that cover different aspects of the forest estate. The information from these systems, such as effectiveness monitoring of existing management prescriptions, is used to inform adaptive management and continuous improvement approaches to the ecologically sustainable management of Tasmanian forests. The State is reviewing its approaches to forest related research and development as part of its broader forest policy and industry growth planning being undertaken throughout 2016.

RECOMMENDATION 8 – THE PARTIES ENSURE ANY FUTURE PRESCRIPTIONS FOR HARVESTING NON-MERCHANTABLE BIOMASS FROM NATIVE FOREST COUPES ARE DEVELOPED AND MONITORED USING THE AVAILABLE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Joint Government Response

The Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement provides for the Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management and use of forests in Tasmania. Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management is implemented through the suite of legislation, policies, codes, plans and management practices in the State's Forest Management System. The system is also underpinned by adaptive management and continuous improvement processes.

The Parties agree the results of monitoring and research will continue to be used by the State to refine and improve the State's *Forest Practices Code* provisions, guidelines and planning tools. Where new prescriptions are developed in relation to management of forest residues, these will be based on available scientific knowledge. They will provide for regeneration, nutrient preservation and biodiversity, and be incorporated into appropriate Forest Practices planning tools.

RECOMMENDATION 9 – THE STATE CONSIDERS MATTERS RAISED IN SUBMISSIONS TO THIS REVIEW, IN RELATION TO THE PERMANENT NATIVE FOREST ESTATE POLICY (PNFEP), AS PART THE 2015 STATE PNFEP REVIEW AND THE OUTCOMES BE INCORPORATED IN ANY REVISED PNFEP AND RECOGNISED IN A RENEWED/EXTENDED TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Joint Government Response

The Parties acknowledge that maintaining an extensive and permanent native forest estate is a key conservation goal identified in the [National Forest Policy Statement \(1992\)](#) and is one of the primary elements to achieve Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management. The Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement provides for this through the State's [Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy](#), which has been given statutory effect across public and private land under the *Forest Practices Act 1985* (Tas).

On 1 August 2015, the State commenced a review of the Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy, with a four week public consultation period. On 23 December 2015, the State announced an extension to the review to explicitly take account of this recommendation. The extension of the Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy review will ensure that matters raised in public submissions to both the Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy and the third five-yearly Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement reviews are comprehensively considered by the State.

The Parties agree that the maintenance of a permanent native forest estate should continue to be part of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION 10 – THE PARTIES FOLLOW-UP ON THEIR RESPONSE TO THE 2007 REVIEW TO ENSURE THAT COMPATIBILITY OF THE RFA WITH COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE PROTECTION LEGISLATION IS CONSIDERED AS PART OF THE TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT RENEWAL/EXTENSION PROCESS

Joint Government Response

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwth) was amended in 2003 to include 'national heritage places' as a matter of national environmental significance. This amendment came into effect on 1 January 2004.

The Parties agree to review the compatibility of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement with current Commonwealth and State legislative frameworks.

RECOMMENDATION 11 – THE PARTIES CONTINUE TO INCLUDE REGULAR REVIEWS OF THE SUSTAINABLE SAWLOG YIELD AS AN ELEMENT OF A RENEWED/EXTENDED TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Joint Government Response

The Parties agree that sustainable yield from the public production forests of Tasmania requires regular reviews to provide confidence to all stakeholders on the reliability of the volumes allocated to wood processing industries to achieve Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management.

The Parties agree that regular reviews of the sustainable yield, taking into account changing biotic and abiotic risk factors, should continue to be part of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement. The most recent review of sustainable yield was published in March 2014 and is available on Forestry Tasmania's [website](#).

RECOMMENDATION 12 – THE STATE ENSURES MATTERS RAISED IN SUBMISSIONS TO THIS REVIEW IN RELATION TO THE MANAGEMENT, SUPPLY AND MARKETING OF SPECIAL SPECIES TIMBERS BE CONSIDERED THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW STATE SPECIAL SPECIES TIMBER MANAGEMENT PLAN AND THE OUTCOMES RECOGNISED IN A RENEWED/EXTENDED TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Joint Government Response

The State agrees to consider the matters raised in the submissions to the Independent Review about special species timbers, as part of the development of a special species management plan.

Under the *Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act 2014* (Tas) a special species management plan is required to be developed by October 2017. The State has commenced the process of developing this plan and is preparing a draft plan for public consultation in accordance with the legislation. The legislation requires the plan to specify a range of matters, including the species and land to which the plan applies, and established supply levels.

RECOMMENDATION 13 – IF THE COMMONWEALTH SHOULD IMPLEMENT ANY SIGNIFICANT FUTURE TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT FUNDING PROGRAM IT SHOULD ESTABLISH CLEAR PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION MEASURES

Joint Government Response

The Commonwealth commits to establishing clear performance and evaluation measures for any future Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement related expenditure. The Commonwealth uses robust government funding frameworks to guide these monitoring and evaluation measures, including the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cwth), the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines* (2014) and the Australian National Audit Office's *Implementing Better Practice Grants Administration* (2013). The Commonwealth notes that the legislation and guidelines were released after the review period.

RECOMMENDATION 14 – THE PARTIES SUPPORT AN UPDATED SOCIO ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AS PART OF THE TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT RENEWAL/EXTENSION PROCESS AND PERIODIC COLLECTION OF SOCIO ECONOMIC DATA DURING THE TERM OF A RENEWED/EXTENDED TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Joint Government Response

The Parties recognise the importance of socio economic data and support the periodic collection of robust data. The Parties will consider the need for updated socio economic analyses as part of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement extension process.

The Parties note that they collect and report on socio economic data through the [Australian](#) and [Tasmanian](#) State of the Forests Report series. Additional economic data are provided in a range of reports including [Australian forest and wood products statistics](#), [Australian plantation statistics](#), [National Wood Processing Survey](#) and [the Census of Population and Housing](#).

The Parties agree that periodic collection of socio economic data should continue throughout the term of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION 15 – THE STATE CONSIDERS IMPROVED MECHANISMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE AS PART OF THE TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT RENEWAL/EXTENSION

Joint Government Response

The State is committed to acknowledging and managing Aboriginal cultural heritage. This includes supporting regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms for heritage protection, in addition to community engagement and public education. This approach is broad-based and designed to guide land management across all tenures. It will inform mechanisms to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage as part of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement extension.

The State acknowledges that significant efforts to develop contemporary legislative protection mechanisms, arising in part from commitments associated with Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement five-yearly reviews, failed to gain passage through both Houses of the Tasmanian Parliament in 2013. The State, however, remains committed to ongoing dialogue with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. In particular the Aboriginal Heritage Council provides a formal mechanism for broad-based consultation with Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations and groups on relevant issues.

The State has improved its consultation processes with the Aboriginal community in forest management planning and stewardship since the third five-yearly review reporting period (2007 – 2012). The Forest Practices Authority released *Resource guide for managing cultural heritage in wood production forests* in 2012, and the more recent *Procedures for Managing Aboriginal Cultural Heritage when preparing Forest Practices Plans*, to provide specific guidance on the process to be undertaken if Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or suspected during forest management planning processes. Forest practices officer training courses covering Aboriginal cultural awareness and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage have been instigated in 2015, with significant input from Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and delivery by members of the Aboriginal community.

RECOMMENDATION 16 – THE PARTIES CONSIDER THE SIMPLIFICATION OF A RENEWED/EXTENDED TASMANIAN REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT BY DEALING WITH FEWER AREAS AT A HIGHER STRATEGIC LEVEL AND WITH A GREATER EMPHASIS ON MEASURING AND REPORTING OUTCOMES

Joint Government Response

The Parties agree to consider the simplification of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement as part of the extension process, noting that much of the current agreement contains commitments that have now been completed, are redundant or have been superseded.

The Parties support five-yearly reviews of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement as the appropriate mechanism to measure and report outcomes, and agree to examine options to better measure and report on outcomes.

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