

Tasmanian Forest Agreement Verification:

Professor Jonathan West, Chair Independent Verification Group

Advice to Intergovernmental Taskforce on the independent verification process and agreement by the Reference Group of Signatories

Purpose:

This advice responds to Clause 3 of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement Independent Verification Group Terms of Reference.

The terms of reference for this advice are to:

“As part of this process, the Independent Verification Group is required to seek the agreement of the Signatories on the process (including the underlying methodology for assessing the matters set out in paragraph 2 above) for conducting the independent verification and their agreement to accept the results. The Chair is to inform the Intergovernmental Taskforce by 10 September 2011 of the process and whether the Signatories have agreed to it and to accept the results (Clause 20).”

Advice

In accordance with paragraph 3 of the Terms of the Reference for the Independent Verification Group, I can report that the Reference Group of Signatories has unanimously agreed to the process described below and will accept its results. The following is an outline of the process that will be followed for the independent verification process that is required under Clause 20 of the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement. This process is based on delivering the requirements of paragraphs 5, 6 and 7, and 9 of the Terms of Reference, noting that there will be ongoing consultation with the Reference Group of Signatories throughout the process including in developing the underlying methodology for assessing the matters set out in paragraph 2 of the Terms of Reference.

The Independent Verification Group, supported by a Technical Working Group and other experts as required, will:

1. Assess and provide advice about stakeholder claims relating to conservation values, areas and boundaries of potential reserves from within the ENGO-nominated 572,000

hectares of High Conservation Value native forest (as required by Clauses 20 and 28 of the Intergovernmental Agreement).

In undertaking this work, the independent verification process will examine ENGO and other stakeholder claims relating to conservation values, taking into account all currently available information, and using criteria and a methodology to be developed by the Independent Verification Group in consultation with the Reference Group of Signatories. The process will also identify appropriate reserve boundaries that would be necessary to protect the conservation values that are identified by this process.

2. Assess and provide advice on whether at least 155,000 cubic metres per year of high-quality sawlogs, 265,000 cubic metres of rotary peeled veneer billets, and an appropriate supply of specialty timber noting that the industry claim is 12,500 cubic metres, (as required by Clause 17 of the Intergovernmental Agreement) can be sustainably supplied from outside the areas identified in paragraph 1 above, over both the short and longer terms, taking into account existing wood supply requirements, contracts and usage, potential voluntary exits and availability of suitable plantation wood supply as noted in Clauses 23 and 24 of the IGA, respectively.

In undertaking this work, the independent verification process will verify wood supply requirements (including for specialty timber) at a statewide and regional level taking into account the wood supply guarantees in Clauses 17 and 18 of the Intergovernmental Agreement, contracts and actual usage (including at a regional level) based on the best available information from Forestry Tasmania and other industry sources. The process will assess whether these wood supply requirements can be met from outside the areas identified by paragraph 1 above from 1 January 2012 on a sustainable forest management basis, and also whether these requirements can be met from outside these areas in the longer term on a sustainable forest management basis taking into account potential voluntary exits and the future availability of suitable plantation wood supply. More detailed methodology and modeling to be used for this purpose (including in relation to timeframes, economic and operational viability, and relevant discount factors) will be developed by the Independent Verification Group in consultation with the Reference Group of Signatories.

3. If it is determined that the guaranteed wood supply (including at the regional level) cannot be supplied from outside the areas identified by the process under paragraph 1 above:

- a. Provide advice on how much and what elements of the guaranteed wood supply cannot be met from outside the areas identified by the process under paragraph 1 above; and
- b. Advise how much and what elements of the guaranteed wood supply would therefore need to be met from within the areas identified by the process under paragraph 1 above.

4. If under paragraph 3 harvesting is deemed necessary in the areas identified in paragraph 1 above, the Independent Verification Group will consult with the Reference Group of Signatories to develop and seek agreement on an agreed option(s) to

minimise impacts on conservation values while ensuring compatibility with guaranteed wood supply.

The Signatories note that the Australian and Tasmanian Governments have agreed under Clause 20 of the Intergovernmental Agreement to be bound by the results of the independent verification process, should they agree on such options.

5. Verify known potential economic development opportunities and the conservation values in the areas identified in 5 above to inform government decisions on appropriate land tenure (clause 29).

6. Recommend any further legislative requirements that will assist the durability of the Intergovernmental Agreement and be needed to underpin guaranteed industry supply, conservation outcomes and the transition plan required for the successful delivery of the supply and protection commitments in the IGA (clauses 10, 19 and 37).