

Subject of Submission: Effective exclusion of Regional Forest Agreement from operation of EPBC in Tasmania.

The exclusion of forestry from the operations of the EPBC is perhaps the grossest shortcoming of the Act. In Tasmania this has led to the fastest proportional rate of native forest destruction in the developed world. Over 1% of Tasmania's total forest is logged yearly at a net loss to the taxpayer. Environmental jurisdiction in Tasmania's 1.5m ha State Forest has been assigned to the logging industry on a self-regulatory basis, with the result that commercial interests enjoy priority. Tasmanian environmental legislation has been progressively amended to reflect this priority.

The State Forest is augmented by an approximately 1 m ha of privately owned forest, which is also subject to state legislation and policies, such as the Protection of Agricultural Land policy (PAL) which prevent the legislative protection of forest from the logging industry. Forestry is classified as agriculture for this purpose, despite being subject to its own, self-regulated, Forest Practices Act, which assigns the industry numerous subsidies and immunities currently worth over \$160m p.a. In all, forestry has access to some 2.5m ha of Tasmania's 3.1m ha of forest where its 90% concentration on woodchip exports completely confounds the RFA's stated intent of providing Australia with a secure domestic timber source with high value recovery

The notion that a commercial extractive industry should be allowed to adjudicate between its commercial interests and environmental concerns on both private and public land is little short of bizarre, and has been substantially abandoned but for Tasmania. The political influence which has produced this situation has resulted in the perversion of governance in the wide range of areas touching on forestry, from aerial spraying regulations, to exemptions to the destruction of threatened vegetation, to concessions on local government rates and land tax. These benefits are unjustified by any overriding public economic benefit, as the number of forestry jobs has more halved in the past decade as its harvest volumes have doubled. The impacts on both species and their habitats can be imagined.

The possibly collateral environmental impacts on the human population are conspicuously ignored, with Tasmania's rocketing rates of cancer and immune disorders sparking little apparent interest from responsible public officials.

Australia is in a situation where one of its states is being ravaged on an internationally shameful scale while its government claims an impotence to exert anything but the most peripheral influence. Why? The answer is quite clearly the seduction of both the Tasmanian and Federal political establishments by a highly concentrated industry

which very aggressively pursues, and captures, access to both public resources and subsidies.

To provide an EPBC worthy of the name, and of any respect, steps must be taken to legally subject environmental decision-making to disinterested scientific advice. Whatever its technical legality, the dispensing of environmental resources from the pork barrel has proven a disaster.

If this submission is judged as outside the terms of reference of the review, then please regard that omission as another object of complaint.

John Hayward