

18 January 2013

Secretary

Mr Stuart Wright

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Dear Mr Wright,

After an enormous effort my submission in three parts to the Legislative Council Committee was completed and submitted yesterday.

Thank you for your phone call acknowledging receipt.

I have now had a short time to scan the Government's submissions and attachments that were submitted to your Chamber in the last 48 hours.

I am totally and utterly appalled by such behaviour which from a government is unconscionable.

The demand for a "quickie" in decision making trashes "process" which enables vested interests to hide their agenda by using devious polities to facilitate their cause over the Christmas-January holiday period.

To-day is the last day that the public has an opportunity to comment on the Proposed Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012 and the Tasmanian Forest Agreement.

In the very recently submitted material by the government there are 158 pages of Amendments. Schedule A for example has 295 land parcel lots that have to be assessed very carefully. This cannot be done in a few hours, or even a few weeks. Other attachments add to the considerable number of pages of new material to be analysed and critiqued. My time is voluntary and not paid for, and those who help and advise me also have other professional occupations.

There is still vital missing information that would help the Legislative Council Committee. For example in Schedule A, Column 6 has been left blank. Is this where the public would have learned what exact forest type belonged to which land lot parcel? The public have been given no insight into forest type in no less than 295 land parcels. There is an accepted process for this. In the Regional Forest Agreement of 1997, there were 50 forest communities listed. The TASVEG project had identified far more communities subsequent to that Agreement (at least up to 77). One or other of these government recognised documents has to be used and added to Schedule A for each of the 295 land parcel lots. So that the public can see which land lot parcels contain which forested listed types? Given the other columns in Schedule A it then would be possible to discern exactly what future is projected for each. It is quite possible that larger lot sizes contain a mixture of forested listed types (i.e. one lot size is 26,000 + ha). Schedule A has 8 columns with no title heading to any of the columns. Why not?

For example Column 5 almost always lists "Native forest harvesting". Does this mean that this activity is prohibited or allowable? The difference between Yes and No is palpable. Where is the Integrity Commissioner when you need him? His ability to investigate such matters has been constrained by your own House and its legislation, drawn up by those now sitting on this Committee. There is no information for the 52 forest coupes listed on Schedule B in the Amendments. Only the initiated will know where these are located, what their size is, what type of forest grows on them, when they are intended to be logged. This is not acceptable.

Not to have this information makes a mockery of the entire process.

The data is available from Forestry Tasmania's data base they will not make it available to the public, further unconscionable behaviour by this rogue Government Agency who must be called to account. The maps which are to be attached to the Bill should it proceed to legislation are digital maps. As one zooms to find out exactly which land parcel lot is being considered, definition becomes more and more fuzzy. This is not acceptable.

The public and your own Legislative Councillors need maps at a resolution that is quite clear, concise and readable. What is the scale? Forestry Tasmania would have this data at resolutions that are clear and not fuzzy. Not to have available clear legible maps and plans at a scale that is suitable for assessment continues this mockery of process.

Clear, legible plans and maps need to be placed by Forestry Tasmania publicly on the Legislative Council website. These maps are the heart of the matter.

The audacity with which the Government has waited until the very last moment to release this additional material is breathtaking, it is more than that. What it does is that it diminishes "process" and the orderly, considered, rigorous, progression of that process.

A process that contains integrity, transparency, and open-ness and full disclosure must be mandatory.

Another Forestry scam is about to be perpetrated on the Taxpayer as tremendous pressure is put on those tasked to make this decision by those interested in propping up a dying industry by any means possible.

I am writing to seek further time, but cannot put a date on when that should be. It should not be a date that is relatively quick; again that demeans process. The signatories to this Agreement and its subsequent Bill have been afforded nearly three years to deliver what is before us now. Surely the public are entitled to months, not days to appraise ALL the material that has been put into the public domain.

These are Tasmanian forests that are up for "grabs" and what happens to them concerns all Tasmanians, if not all persons nationally.

Regards,
John Hawkins