

# Initial notes on IVG Conservation Assessment Reports

23 March 2012

## Key Facts

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1. The proposed forest reserves claim that was verified for conservation values is 563 383 hectares<sup>1</sup>.
2. The report found proposed forest reserves contain conservation values that in most cases are nationally and globally significant. These forests are unique and important for the protection of biodiversity, threatened species, natural and cultural heritage, genetic diversity and ecosystem services.
3. 95% of the proposed forest reserve is relatively intact native forest including important stands of tall wet eucalypt forests, cloud forests, rainforest refugia (geographic refuges for biodiversity during times of change) and dry eucalypt forests.
4. 5%, or approximately 28 000 hectares of the ENGO reserve area is either cleared, plantation, thinned and heavily disturbed, or thinned and not heavily disturbed, or used for agriculture.
5. 232, 286 hectares of Tasmania's old growth and ecologically mature forests are in the proposed reserve area..
6. Beyond the proposed forest reserves, state forest land in Tasmania has been extensively logged and/or converted to plantation with the result that much of the natural heritage values have been destroyed or severely degraded. The proposed forest reserves have been found to mainly encapsulate most of the remaining intact forests.  
  
It follows that the proposed reserves represent the last chance to protect many natural heritage values on forested public land.
7. The average annual rate of logging on public forests has increased by 60% since the Regional Forest Agreement was signed in 1996.

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<sup>1</sup> The excised 8,317 ha represents a possible boundary discrepancy that was revealed by very fine scale satellite imagery. Differences can be attributed to the coarser cartographic scale at which the ENGO forest mapping was undertaken. Details are in IVG Technical Report 11, table 11.

8. Establishing the proposed forest reserves creates an opportunity to generate forest management credits to 8.01 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per year over the period of 2013 - 2030 using Australia's international rule set.

This is equal to 7.4 and 8.7% of Australia's cumulative emission reduction task over the periods 2013 – 2020 if Australia has an emission reduction target of 5% for 2020.

This is equal to a reduction of 1.9 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per year of Kyoto Australian Carbon Credit units.<sup>2</sup>

9. The market value of protecting the reserves could equal \$251 – \$650 million in carbon credits over the period of 2013 – 2020 on a low carbon path, \$377 – \$ 973 million on a Clean Energy Future price path, or \$652 – \$1678 million on a high carbon price path over the period of 2013 – 2020.

## **Main Findings:**

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The 563 383 hectares is divided into 270 polygons (units). Each polygon was assessed for its conservation value against ten separate criteria, including the verification of claims made by the ENGOs for each area. Further facts are available on a per unit basis.

The proposed reserve areas will protect conservation values associated with:

- the habitat of many threatened listed and priority plant and animal species;
- evolutionary refugia;
- areas of National Heritage and World Heritage values,
- carbon storage;
- freshwater ecosystem values;
- connectivity for key species and adaptation capacity to climate change;
- unique features associated with Tasmanian eucalypts.

The proposed forest reserve areas have been confirmed to be unique, important and deserving of protection because:

- Of the presence of a substantial proportion of the remaining old growth and ecologically mature forests in Tasmania in the area;
- The forests along the eastern boundary of the existing World Heritage Area are a globally significant functional and connected area of tall eucalypt forests;

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<sup>2</sup> This figure assumes a 15% deduction to account for the risk of leakage and a further 5% for the risk of reversal buffer.

- A large number of Tasmania's 510 giant trees are located in the area;
- It protects important areas of both wet and dry forest ecosystems, which both contain large numbers of unique, and threatened species including endemic flora and fauna;
- Core, known and potential ranges of most major groups of priority threatened fauna including the grey goshawk, azure kingfisher, forty spotted pardalote, swift parrot, masked owl, Tasmanian devil, spotted-tailed quoll, eastern quoll, skemps snail, blind velvet worm, Marrawah skipper, Bornemissza stag beetle, Simpson stag beetle, broad toothed stag beetle, giant freshwater crayfish, Australian grayling, Scottsdale burrowing crayfish, Mt Arthur burrowing crayfish, and fish including the Clarence galaxias are found in the reserve area;
- Half of the reserve area is part of a globally significant large and intact set of marsupial carnivores, the Tasmanian devil, spotted-tailed quolls and eastern quolls;
- The forests provide ecosystem services, including carbon storage and water catchments;
- The forests of the north-east of Tasmania have demonstrated differences in biodiversity and genetics when compared to western Tasmania. This shows a long-term separation between the two parts of Tasmania;
- Macro fungi in wet forests which are in the proposed forest reserves have amongst the highest recorded diversity in the world;
- It will protect and help to maintain eucalypt phylogenetic and genetic diversity including the northern and southern races of *Eucalyptus globulus* (blue gum); western, eastern and Tasman peninsular populations of *Eucalyptus oblique* (stringybark), and the north-eastern and south-eastern *Eucalyptus Regnans* (mountain ash);
- It includes the Wielangta forests, the area with the highest level of eucalypt species richness in Tasmania, disjunct eucalypt populations, variants and natural hybrids;
- It includes forest areas that span an elevation range of 400 metres that will provide refugia for species that may migrate in response to the impacts of climate change;
- The complex topography of Tasmania provides a diversity of micro-climatic conditions and thus habitat conditions that contribute to very high biodiversity and the resiliencies of species and ecosystems, this includes the unique area of cloud forests that includes sea to mountain corridors, a haven for endemic species at South Sister, Mt Elephant and the Blue Tier;

## **Background:**

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The task for the Independent Verification team was to assess and verify stakeholder claims relating to the conservation values and boundaries of reserves from within the ENGO-nominated 572,000 hectares.

The Terms of Reference for the Independent Verification group can be downloaded from:

[http://www.dier.tas.gov.au/forests/tasmanian\\_forests\\_agreement/verification\\_processes](http://www.dier.tas.gov.au/forests/tasmanian_forests_agreement/verification_processes)

Professor Brendan Mackey and Dr Michael Lockwood were appointed by governments because they are leading experts in the field of forest ecology and conservation reserves design and management.

Summaries of the CVs of the conservation experts can be downloaded from:

[http://www.dier.tas.gov.au/forests/tasmanian\\_forests\\_agreement/verification\\_processes](http://www.dier.tas.gov.au/forests/tasmanian_forests_agreement/verification_processes)

The ENGO claims on the conservation values of the 572 000 hectares of proposed new reserves that were subject to verification are outlined in the report titled ‘Tasmania’s Native Forest: Places for Protection: A background on the ENGO identified high conservation value forest reserve area’ June 2012.

This report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.et.org.au/what-are-engos-forest-reserve-proposals>

The map of the 572 000 hectares of public forests there were subject to verification are shown in Attachment A of the Intergovernmental Agreement and can be downloaded from:

[http://www.dier.tas.gov.au/forests/tasmanian\\_forests\\_agreement/verification\\_processes](http://www.dier.tas.gov.au/forests/tasmanian_forests_agreement/verification_processes)