

MEDIA RELEASE

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FIAT to Re-Join Forestry Negotiations

Tasmania's peak forest industry body has decided to terminate its self imposed exile from the talks aimed at securing an agreement on the implementation of the State and Federal Governments Intergovernmental Agreement.

The Forest Industries Association of Tasmania said "we have taken this decision after careful deliberation and in a genuine attempt to give the "peace talks" a chance to see if there is any realistic hope of a lasting resolution to this issue that respects the key principles of the IGA."

Last Friday FIAT called on the signatory ENGO's to show leadership in respect to the protest activity being undertaken by a small but active minority of environment groups seeking to achieve their objectives by direct action rather than by negotiation. The fact that the major environment groups responded positively to that call has given us the confidence that it would be worth giving the negotiations process a genuine opportunity to achieve a durable and mutually agreed outcome.

"The Joint Statement of the signatories issued today makes clear to our markets that all participants in the negotiations are calling for clear air to enable the process to be conducted in the right climate", FIAT Chief Executive Terry Edwards said. "It is clear that all harvesting at the current time is being undertaken in accordance with a Conservation Agreement negotiated by the Federal and State Governments and buyers of our products can be assured that they are being produced in full accordance with existing Government policy and the IGA process."

"This call by the signatories echoes those made over many months by the Tasmanian Government and Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke that space is needed to permit the peace process to have any genuine chance of reaching a resolution" Mr Edwards said.

"Many will perceive this change of position by FIAT as a significant back down from our publicly stated position in respect to the cessation of market based campaigns against the industry.

For more information, contact **Terry Edwards – Chief Executive Officer**

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In response we can only say that the signatory ENGO's have in good faith advised the markets of the views of the mainstream environmental movement and this is a significant step in the "peace" process. To continue to deny the opportunity for negotiations to even commence in this circumstance would have been churlish" Mr Edwards said.

"We have always said we stand prepared to engage in the negotiations process in good faith but required a demonstration of good will from the environment movement that would give us cause to believe there is a purpose in that engagement, we believe this joint statement gives us reason to believe there is a genuine desire to give peace a chance" Mr Edwards said.

It is FIAT's hope that this statement by the mainstream ENGO's and their call for clear air during the negotiations process will be reciprocated by the activist environmental organisations and that they will cease their protest activities to give this process every chance.

"Equally should there be any significant escalation of the protest activity against the industry in the markets clearly that may give us cause to reassess our position, we sincerely hope this will not be necessary" Mr Edwards said.

"We have always believed that there is an opportunity for an agreed outcome from this process but it will require flexibility in approach and a genuine commitment to achieve the underpinning principles embodied in the Intergovernmental Agreement including the potential of new reserves that are consistent with meeting wood supply commitments" Mr Edwards concluded.

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