

# **A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR TASMANIA**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coalition Government recognises the importance of the forest-products industry to the Tasmanian economy, to Tasmanian jobs and regional communities.

The Coalition Government also recognises the inherent value of protecting our ancient old growth forests in Tasmania for current and future generations.

The Coalition Government signed the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) in 1997 to provide certainty for the conservation of the environment and heritage values, to provide for the ecologically sustainable management and use of Tasmanian forests and to provide for future growth and development of the Tasmanian timber and timber related industries and their employees.

Unlike Labor, the Coalition Government is committed to supporting the Regional Forest Agreement and to working within the RFA processes with all stakeholders to achieve appropriate outcomes for our environment, our forest industries and Tasmanian jobs.

Consistent with this, a re-elected Coalition Government will:

- act immediately to add over 170,000 hectares to the current reserve system. As a result, this addition will mean that over 1 million hectares of old growth forest in Tasmania will now be protected from logging;
- task Australian and Tasmanian Environment and Forestry Ministers to advise on the social and economic impacts of protecting these forests and to further identify boundaries by 1 December 2004;
- contribute \$3.6 million towards the voluntary purchasing or covenanting to add to the CAR reserve approximately 2,400 ha of forest at Mole Creek, adjacent to the Mole Creek National Park;
- invest \$2 million into researching alternatives to clear felling to increase forest yield and provide sustainable forest jobs;
- invest \$ 4 million and work with the Tasmanian Government to fast track research into alternative methods to protect new plantings and to end the use of 1080 poison baits on public and private land;
- invest \$1 million towards a study on of the chemical residues from farming and forestry practices on Tasmania's catchments and water quality;

- work with Australian timber wholesalers and retailers to examine options, consistent with our international obligations, to encourage wholesalers and retailers to ensure timbers they sell are sourced from sustainable forest practices;
- remain committed to supporting the establishment of a world class, environmental best practice pulp mill in Tasmania;
- invest \$10 million to assist the softwood industry establish and plant for the environmentally friendly preservation of pine and phase out copper chrome arsonate treating within two years;
- work cooperatively with the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian industry to help turn potential investments in the forest and forest related industries into reality;
- provide \$20 million to assist mills improve sawlog recovery and assist forest businesses adjust and revitalise;
- provide \$4 million to facilitate the introduction of new technologies, new markets, new product lines and re-tooling options to assist country sawmills;
- invest \$4 million to help assist skills and training in the industry;
- commit \$200,000 over four years to increase community awareness about our reserve systems;
- provide \$1 million to assist the development of the Tarkine Bush Walk;
- contribute \$2 million to help accelerate research efforts to find a cure for the Tasmanian Devil; and
- work with the Tasmanian Government to provide ecologically sustainable management and use of forests in Tasmania and to provide for future growth and development of Tasmanian forest industries and employees in accordance with the Regional Forest Agreement.

A re-elected Coalition Government will ensure that the interests of Tasmanian businesses, employees and private landholders are protected.

## **PART 1 PRESERVING TASMANIA'S OLD GROWTH FORESTS**

The 1997 Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement increased the size of the conservation reserve system in Tasmania.

Currently more than 40 per cent of Tasmania and 68 per cent of its public forest is held in reserve. In addition 68 per cent of Tasmania's old growth forest and almost 95 per cent of Tasmania's high quality wilderness is now protected in reserves and is not available for timber harvesting.

The 1997 Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement was a great improvement over the ad hoc arrangements that had been in place in the early 1990s. It added some 440,000 hectares to the reserve system.

The Regional Forest Agreement has provided certainty for industry. Coupled with the Coalition's strong economic management yielding low inflation, low unemployment and low interest rates, the RFA has provided confidence and security for industry development and investment.

Unlike Labor the Coalition remains committed to maximizing confidence and certainty for both industry and conservationists and to working with all stakeholders to optimize opportunities for the sustainable preservation of Tasmania's old growth forests, the sustainable development of Tasmania's forest and forest products industries and the creation of sustainable jobs.

### **PRESERVING TASMANIA'S OLD GROWTH FORESTS**

In accordance with the Regional Forest Agreement, a re-elected Coalition Government will negotiate with the Tasmanian Government to immediately add over 170,000 hectares to the current reserve system.

This will include the:

- immediate protection of an additional 76,100 hectares of rainforest in the Tarkine, Southern forests (including the Huon and Weld Valleys) and North East Tasmania;
- immediate protection of 18,700 hectares of old growth forest in the Styx and the Florentine along the Eastern Boundary World Heritage Area;
- immediate protection of an additional 29,600 hectares of old growth forest on the Eastern Tiers, Tasman Peninsula and North East Highlands (including the Blue and Great Western Tiers) and Central Highlands;

- immediate protection of 1,300 hectares in the sub alpine areas; and
- immediate reservation of an additional 43,200 hectares of private land to the CAR reserve through voluntary sale or covenanting.

In addition to the above, a re-elected Coalition Government will contribute \$3.6 million towards the voluntary purchasing or covenanting of approximately 2,400 ha of forest at Mole Creek adjacent to the Mole Creek National Park.

As a result, this addition will mean that over 1 million hectares of old growth forest in Tasmania will now be protected from logging.

Respective Australian Government and Tasmanian Government Ministers for the Environment and Forests will be tasked to advise on the social and economic impacts of protecting these forests and to further identify boundaries.

The Coalition will not create unnecessary delays and uncertainty or institute unnecessary reviews.

It is the Coalition Government's intention that the negotiations with the Tasmanian Government and any actions necessary to give effect to any agreement be completed by 1 December 2004.

While the negotiations must be finalized with the Tasmanian Government it should be noted that the proposed listing of these additions to reserves has the support of the Timber Communities of Australia, the Forest Industry Association of Tasmania and the National Association of Forest Industries.

A re-elected Coalition Government will also ensure that the interests of Tasmanian businesses, employees, private landholders and the Indigenous communities are protected and where appropriate stakeholders are properly compensated in accordance with the provisions of the Regional Forest Agreement.

On the best advice we have received we do not expect this approach to create job losses.

## **PART 2 SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT**

Sustainable and transparent forest management practices are critical to maintaining biodiversity values and to making sensible investment and conservation decisions.

The Coalition welcomes the decision taken by the Lennon Government on 30 August 2004 to introduce changes to the Tasmanian forest practices system to improve the governance and transparency of the forest industry and to overhaul the Forest Practices Board.

These changes to the governance, the monitoring and enforcement of the Forest Practices Code are a positive step forward.

The Coalition looks forward to the implementation of these changes and to working with the Lennon Government to build on these reforms to facilitate best practice forest management in Tasmania.

Research undertaken by the CSIRO and others suggests that opportunities exist, through improved low level pruning of plantations, to gain more high quality saw logs from existing plantations.

Greater low level pruning would bring benefits to the environment, the industry and employment.

There may be other forest management practices that could be applied to increase timber yields, improve environmental outcomes and create sustainable forestry jobs.

A re-elected Coalition Government will invest \$2 million to research alternatives to clear felling to increase forest yield and provide sustainable forest jobs.

### **1080**

The sight of native animals dying from 1080 poisoning is unacceptable to Australians.

The Coalition applauds the recent announcement by Premier Lennon to phase out and completely ban the use of 1080 in state forests by December 2005.

A re-elected Coalition Government will work with the Tasmanian Government and commit \$4 million over two years to fast track research into alternative methods to protect new planting and to end the use of 1080 poison baits on both public and private land as soon as possible and no later than December 2005.

## **RIVER CATCHMENT WATER QUALITY AUDITING**

Increasing concern is being expressed about the possible pollution of river systems by the use of fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides in farming and forestry industries within river catchments.

Further evidence is needed to accurately assess this potential risk and provide an assurance to local communities that water quality is safe for long term consumption.

A re-elected Coalition Government will invest \$1 million towards a study of the chemical residues from farming and forestry practices in Tasmanian river catchments, Tasmania, under the scientific guidance of the CSIRO.

## **SUSTAINABLY HARVESTED TIMBER**

Increasing the protection of Australia's high conservation value forests should not lead to increased demand overseas of unsustainably harvested rainforest timbers.

A re-elected Coalition Government will work with major Australian timber wholesalers and retailers to examine options, consistent with our international obligations, to encourage wholesalers and retailers to ensure the timbers they sell are sourced from sustainable forest practices.

## **PART 3 INVESTING IN A FOREST FUTURE**

A viable, sustainable forest and forest products industry is critical to Tasmania's future and to the regional communities that depend on these industries.

In addition to Tasmania's many hardwood and softwood mills, speciality timbers, arts, crafts, furniture and other speciality industries depend on sustainably harvested timber.

Through sound economic management, the Coalition is committed to providing an investment climate of certainty through which sustainable forest management practices and value adding to Tasmania's forest resources can create sustainable forestry jobs.

## **PULP MILL**

On 29 June 2004 the Coalition announced it will contribute up to \$5 million to assist with the project costs of the development of an environmental best practice pulp mill in Tasmania.

Gunns Limited has commenced a study into a world-class Total Chlorine Free pulp mill to determine its economic viability.

Should it proceed, this investment will represent the single largest private investment in Tasmania, providing a significant boost to Tasmanian jobs and the Tasmanian economy.

A \$1 billion investment could generate substantial export earnings for Tasmania, create 300 direct jobs, more than 1,000 indirect jobs and 3,000 construction jobs.

This presents a significant opportunity for the creation of long-term jobs growth in Tasmania and for the up-skilling of the local workforce.

The Coalition remains committed to supporting the establishment of a world class, environmental best practice pulp mill in Tasmania.

A re-elected Coalition Government will also work with the Tasmanian Government to encourage and promote other value added investments such as the veneer plants for the Huon Valley and Smithton.

## **SOFTWOOD INDUSTRY**

Investment opportunities also exist in the softwood industry.

AusPine's proposal to invest \$450 million to revitalise the softwood industry in Tasmania provides opportunities for forest industry job creation and downstream value adding to a resource that is not reliant on old-growth forests.

By utilising the 75,000 ha of softwood plantations already planted and securing a greater level of resource security, AusPine's proposal has the potential to provide sustainable employment opportunities for over 700 forest employees.

A re-elected Coalition Government will invest \$10 million over two years to assist the softwood industry establish and plant for the environmentally friendly preservation of pine and phase out Copper Chrome Arsonate (CCA) within two years.

A re-elected Coalition Government looks forward to working with the Tasmanian Government to turn these potential investments into reality.

## **SPECIALITY TIMBERS**

Tasmania's specialty timber industry sustains an estimated 650 full-time equivalent jobs and generates a significant level of downstream processing.

The specialty timbers industry supports the retention and development of fine wood skills and the creation of uniquely crafted forest products.

Specialty timbers such as deep red myrtle, blackwood, sassafras, celery top pine and leatherwood, are used for fine furniture production, boat building or flooring.

Huon pine and King Billy pines are non-commercial, scarce, very special species and are prized for their timber qualities and aromatic oils. They are primarily used for very fine furniture and musical instruments.

Through sustainable forest management and industry development we can help ensure that Tasmania's specialty timbers industry continues to produce the fine furniture, design, veneer, domestic and commercial interior decoration, boat building and craft products that Australians value.

## **INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALISATION**

Forest conservation decisions, technological change and opportunities presented by the opening up of new markets present opportunities for industry revitalisation, restructuring and development.

Entrepreneurs who have the initiative to create high value products out of logs that would otherwise have been chipped should be given that opportunity.

A re-elected Coalition Government will provide \$20 million over four years to revitalise the industry, assist mills to improve sawlog recovery rates (including upgrading mills to process different grades of saw logs) and to assist forestry businesses to adjust to any reduction in supplies.

## **RE-TOOLING FOR COUNTRY SAWMILLS**

Country sawmills provide regional employment and are significant contributors to regional towns.

Increasing the level of old-growth forests and private land in reserves will impact on these sawmills and the regions that rely on them.

A re-elected Coalition Government will not abandon country sawmills, their workers or their regional communities.

A re-elected Coalition Government will invest \$4 million over 4 years to facilitate the introduction of new technologies, new markets, new product lines and re-tooling options to assist country sawmills.

## **PART 4 SKILLS AND TRAINING**

The future of a competitive forest and forest products industry rests on its skilled and trained workforce.

The Coalition recognises the importance of skills, training and education to build a strong industry and economic future and provide opportunities for Australians workers.

This is particularly important for the forest and forest products industries many of which are small and medium sized companies.

Over the next few years the timber industry will be facing skills shortages in all categories of workers - from low-skilled to university graduates.

Changes to forest management practices and technological advances will heighten this pressure.

A re-elected Coalition Government will invest \$4 million over four years to help address this workforce challenge by enhancing skills and training opportunities in the forest and forest products industry.

## **PART 5 COMMUNITY AWARENESS**

Education and awareness about our environment, our forests and their sustainable management is something everyone should be aware of.

Communities should be aware of the environment around us and what we are doing to preserve and conserve it.

More information about our environment, our reservation system and forest management practices will help us better understand and manage the environment.

A re-elected Coalition Government will commit \$200,000 over four years to increase awareness in our communities about how we care about our plants, animals and forests through our reserve systems.

## **PART 6 INVESTING IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Forest related tourism presents significant opportunities for the Tasmanian economy, Tasmanian industries and Tasmanian jobs.

Almost 15,000 Tasmanians (7 per cent of Tasmania's workforce) are directly employed in the state's tourism industry.

Forest-related tourism projects present opportunities for employment and regional growth - particularly for those communities dependent on forest industries.

Tasmania has the potential to build a high-value tourism industry based on conserved forests that are properly accessible and presented.

A re-elected Coalition Government will promote the development of tourism infrastructure such as access points, walking trails, visitor facilities and interpretation centres.

A re-elected Coalition Government will provide \$1 million over 2 years to assist the development of the Tarkine Bush Walk.

## **PART 7 SAVING THE TASMANIAN DEVIL**

The Tasmanian Devil is one of Tasmania's key tourism icons.

The Tasmanian Devil has made its mark on the state and has been chosen as the symbol of the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In addition to being a tourism icon, the Tasmanian Devil plays an important role on the land. It keeps the mice populations under control and acts as a buffer to the establishment of foxes in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Devil now faces a major challenge - a challenge that is threatening its viability.

An illness called Devil Facial Tumor Disease has been killing adult devils in recent years.

A re-elected Coalition Government will join the Tasmanian Government in its efforts to help scientists study and treat the disease.

A re-elected Coalition Government will contribute \$2 million over 2 years (including extending the services of CSIRO scientists) to help accelerate research efforts to find a cure for the Tasmanian Devil.

## **PART 8 THE REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT**

The 1997 Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement was a great improvement over the *ad hoc* arrangements that had been in place in the early 1990s.

It has provided certainty and stability for the Tasmanian industry and conservation groups - a certainty that has generated the investment climate to foster confidence for new investments in forest and downstream value adding activities and the potential for sustainable jobs creation.

A re-elected Coalition Government will continue to support the RFA and will work with the Tasmanian Government within the RFA processes.

With the agreement of the Tasmanian Government this proposal will be consistent with the 1997 Regional Forest Agreement.

To clarify the status of the reserve system, management arrangements and any adjustment assistance provisions, the RFA will be supplemented by an exchange of letters.

## COSTINGS SUMMARY

<b>A Sustainable Future for Tasmania</b>					
<b>POLICY MEASURE</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>
Mole Creek	1.8	1.8	-	-	<b>3.6</b>
Pine Plantations	5.0	5.0	-	-	<b>10.0</b>
Research into Alternatives to Clear Felling	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	<b>2.0</b>
Elimination of 1080	2.0	2.0	-	-	<b>4.0</b>
River Catchment Water Quality Auditing	0.5	0.5	-	-	<b>1.0</b>
Industry Revitalisation	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	<b>20.0</b>
Re-tooling Country Saw Mills	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	<b>4.0</b>
Skills and Training	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	<b>4.0</b>
Education & Awareness	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	<b>0.2</b>
Tarkine Bush Walk	0.5	0.5	-	-	<b>1.0</b>
Saving the Tasmanian Devil	1.0	1.0	-	-	<b>2.0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18.35</b>	<b>18.35</b>	<b>7.55</b>	<b>7.55</b>	<b>51.8</b>

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