

MEDIA RELEASE

Forest Industry leaders call for calm over Tasmanian logging moratorium

The forest industry has called for calm amongst signatories to the Tasmanian Principles agreement, backing calls by Premier Lara Giddings and Minister Bryan Green to allow the process being overseen by Bill Kelty to run its course.

The National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) and Forest Industries Association of Tasmania (FIAT) are disappointed that environmental groups are now pushing their call for a moratorium on logging in 600,000 hectares of native forests by 15 March 2011 outside the Kelty process.

NAFI Chief Executive Allan Hansard said industry groups had entered into the agreement in good faith, on the clear understanding that the moratorium and maintaining wood supply to industry were inextricably linked.

“It has always been very clear that the Statement of Principles contains a number of aspirational targets and conflicting principles. It has been for this reason that Mr Kelty was appointed,” he said.

“We call for the negotiations by media to cease and for the environmental groups to return to the table and to get on with the job. An interim report by Mr Kelty is due next week and I urge all signatories to reserve further public comment on the moratorium.

“We also call on Politicians to give the Kelty process a fair go and let it run its course,” he said.

FIAT Chief Executive Terry Edwards said “The agreement very clearly states that no principle can be applied that would require any party to breach any contractual or statutory obligation, including Forestry Tasmania,” he said.

“It is clear that any move to implement the 600,000 hectare moratorium at this time will lead to a situation where Forestry Tasmania would be required to breach its contracts to FIAT members and other processors for wood supply to sawmills and veneer mills and for harvest and haulage contractors.

“FIAT agreed to sign on to the Statement of Principles following a guarantee from the Tasmanian Government that wood supply to FIAT members and other processors would be protected through long term secure contracts. The calls by Mr McKim and the environmental groups now raise the very sovereign risk issues we endeavoured to avoid.

“To implement the moratorium without also securing industry resource needs, also promised by the agreement, would see sawmills and veneer mills in Tasmania close immediately, costing thousands of jobs immediately,” he said.

ENDS

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