

Reverend Dr R Bos
44 Tibbits Street
BUNDAMBA QLD 4304

Dear Rev Dr Bos

Thank you for your letter of 21 May 2001 concerning current forest management practices within Tasmania and, in particular, on Mt Arthur in the north-east of the State.

Please be assured that the Tasmanian Government is committed to protecting the State's forests. The matter of protection of old growth forest in Tasmania and the future use of the timber resources they contain, was a particular focus during development of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) which was signed by the Prime Minister and the Tasmanian Premier in 1997.

The primary purpose of the RFA is to establish a framework to effectively manage conservation, forest management and forest industry practices. The RFA is a 20 year plan that has established a number of benefits from an economic, environmental and social perspective.

As a result of the RFA, 86 per cent of Tasmania's old growth forests on public land has been protected for conservation and tourism purposes in viable and secure reserves, or is otherwise generally unavailable for timber harvesting. You make reference in your letter to New Zealand. However, Tasmania well exceeds New Zealand's performance in retaining and conserving natural forest cover.

As the manager of State forests, Forestry Tasmania operates within, and must comply with, the Tasmanian *Forestry Act 1920*. It is a requirement that Tasmania's State forests are managed for wood production in perpetuity, and Forestry Tasmania complies with that required.

Biodiversity is addressed at an operational level through the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code. All operations by Forestry Tasmania are carried out in accordance with an approved Forest Practices Plan, prepared under the *Forest Practices Act 1985*, that takes into account special values such as flora, fauna, landscape, geomorphology and cultural heritage.

Before forestry operations can commence in a coupe an evaluation of the various environmental values must be undertaken and appropriate measures placed in the Forest Practices Plan for the coupe to protect these values. Those measures include buffers on streams and limitations on machinery access adjoining streams. There are also laws and codes of practice applying to chemical use, which ensure that there is a minimal risk of chemicals used in forest operations entering a stream.

I have noted your comments about forestry operations on Mt Arthur. I have been advised that the Forest Practices Board, following receipt on 8 March 2001 of a formal complaint, undertook to investigate alleged breaches of the Forest Practices Code relating to logging operations at Mt Arthur coupe LI126C.

Senior officers of the Board, including the Chief Forest Practices Officer and the Senior Scientist, and a Senior Environmental Officer from the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment subsequently undertook investigations. In view of the seriousness of the complaints advice was also sought from the Tasmanian Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Forest Practices Board, in consultation with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, found no evidence of any matter that would cause undue environmental harm or warrant legal action under the *Forest Practices Act 1985*. The Board also found that the majority of the alleged breaches of the Code were unsubstantiated.

There was one marginal breach that involved the snagging of logs within a drainage depression. I have been advised that this incident has not resulted in any harm to soil or water values. Normally, the process of a formal issue of a notice to the responsible party deals with relatively minor breaches, and serves as a warning against any recurrence of the incident.

Additionally, Forest Tasmania has sought a recent assessment of water quality at Mt Arthur. Tests conducted by Analytical Services Tasmania on water samples confirm no detectable residues from spraying operations.

The forestry issue has been in the forefront of political and environmental debate since at least 1985, and since that time, Tasmania has come a long way. The State's level of conservation places Tasmania at the forefront of international standards, and is a world class achievement.

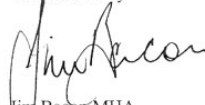
The majority of the community certainly supports the balance now between reserves and the amount of timber available for logging. As Premier of Tasmania, I'm keen to ensure that the balance is maintained. Forestry is an important industry in Tasmania. It supports any of our families. Equally, our natural heritage is contributing to our economy and well being.

Thank you for your interest and please be assured that I'm conscious of the value of our natural environment, and maintaining the balance in the best interests of the whole community.

Yours sincerely

Jim Bacon MHA
Premier

Yours sincerely



Jim Bacon MHA
Premier

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