

# The lowdown on the Tasmanian Government's plan to log converted nature reserves

## The Basics:

- **The what:** The policy of the Tasmanian Liberal Government is to hand over hundreds of thousands of hectares of public, scientifically-verified High Conservation Value forested nature reserves converted to a logging tenure for the logging industry.
- **The how:** The Rebuilding the Forestry Act 2014 changed the tenure of 356,000 hectares forested nature reserves called Future Reserve Land to a logging tenure (technical name: Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF)). The Act provides the deadline from which the logging industry can start logging these converted reserves, which is April 8 2020. The logging minister, Guy Barnett, decides which areas to carve-up for the private sector.
- **The backstory:** These converted reserves were originally classified in a tenure called Future Reserve Land and were meant to be protected as part of the Tasmanian

Forest Agreement. These forests could have been protected upfront but were instead temporarily protected while discussions were ongoing. The Liberal State Government tore up the agreement and decided to log these reserves instead.

- **The where:** There are 226 individual converted reserves spread across the state, clustered mainly in the northwest and north east. These include a huge 100 000 hectares in takayna / Tarkine and important forest areas in Break O'Day, around Ben Lomond, Douglas-Aspley and Tasman Peninsula national parks, as well as at Wielangta and on Bruny Island.
- **The area:** The 356,000 hectares of converted nature reserves that can now be logged is the same area as 180,000 Melbourne Cricket Grounds of forest. For Tasmanians, that's the equivalent of logging 10 Bruny Islands. (And don't forget the converted reserves that could be logged includes a swathe on Bruny Island itself.)

## The Nature:

- **What are HCVs?** The Independent Verification Group (IVG) that assessed these converted reserves as part of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement provided these qualities as High Conservation Values: 1) forest biodiversity, 2) Threatened species habitat, 3) Refugia (special locations or species, for example that have survived since the last glacial period), 4) Old-growth forests, 5) Wilderness, 6) World Heritage values, 7) Connectivity (eg wildlife habitat corridors), 8) Restoration, 9) Ecosystem services and 10) Unique conservation features. The IVG produced more than 60 reports confirming the HCVs of these threatened converted reserves.
- **Climate change:** If Tasmania's Premier for Climate Change' Peter Gutwein is sincere about reducing carbon emissions, the single most effective thing he could do would be to protect these converted reserves. But if he wants to make a mockery of his Climate Change credentials,

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then his policy of logging these converted reserves will achieve it.

- **The carbon:** If all these converted reserves are logged it would release the equivalent amount of carbon into the atmosphere of increasing Australia's car fleet by 25% or putting 5 million more cars on the roads. That's the same as Australia's entire aviation CO2 emissions for a year (pre-economic downturn).
- **Biodiversity:** Scientists and policy makers recognise we have entered the Anthropocene, which could see two thirds of all species go extinct unless there is immediate intervention to protect and restore ecosystems that support life on Earth. The UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 is the result. Logging native forest reserves flies in the face of the UN Decade, the extinction crisis and the adoption of nature-based solutions to global heating.
- **Threatened species:** Many of Tasmania's over 600 threatened species live in or rely on forests. The threatened reserves are known habitat to thousands of plants and animals,

many of them listed as endangered, critically endangered, threatened or vulnerable. These include masked owls, giant freshwater crayfish, swift parrots, wedge-tailed eagles, quolls and closer to extinction by logging their habitat. Logging their habitat will only send more species towards extinction.

- **The science:** The High Conservation Values (HCV) of these converted reserves are proven. They are some of the most assessed areas anywhere in the country (thanks to the Independent Verification Group, which assessed them as part of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. More than 60 reports are still online evidencing their HCVs.
- **Water:** Forests are critical to Tasmania's water cycle and heading into dry and unpredictable times, they are more critical than ever. Thousands of hectares of the converted FPPF reserves are part of Launceston's water catchment. They could be logged, which would put the Launceston area's water cycle at risk.

- **The tourism:** These converted reserves are full of tourism infrastructure, are close to local communities and are beautiful places to visit. They are already managed by Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service. Their tourism value, social, environmental and economic, is worth more to Tasmania than any value that could be generated from logging them. Nature tourism has been booming in Tasmania, which needs more accessible places for tourists to visit rather than opening up areas in the heart of the wilderness. Local tourism operators are horrified that tourists could soon witness the return of logging, log trucks and social conflict.
- **The glory:** These forests, like many that are already protected, are like Tasmania's church, gym, museum and art gallery all in one, meaning they provide spiritual values, recreational values, scientific values and aesthetic values like beauty. Combine this with the biodiversity and forests become powerful life-enhancing ecosystems that can carry the endeavours of all Tasmanians.

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## Logging Industry:

- **The rorting:** The logging industry was compensated with a more-than \$420 million Exit Package of public money through the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. In return, it agreed to protect and not log these converted reserves. But some contractors, having been compensated, went back into the logging industry anyway. Now the logging industry has said, having taken the money, that it wants to log these converted reserves anyway. Shameless.
- **The money #1:** The Australian public has already paid for a whopping \$420 million exit package so that these public forests can be protected and now Tasmania's government is handing them back to the loggers. It's nothing short of scandalous.
- **The money #2:** The over \$420 million of public money to fund an exit package for the logging industry is on top of the millions and millions that have already been handed to the logging industry in recent years, money that

could have gone into health, education or firefighting:

- 1989 The Helsham Agreement \$42 million
- 1997 Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement \$110 million
- 2005 Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement \$203 million
- 2006 Tasmanian Forest Industry Development Grant Ta Ann Tasmania \$10 million
- 2010 Tasmanian Forest Contractors Exit Agreement \$17 million plus \$5.4 million to assist other contractors remain in business
- 2012 Tasmanian Forest Agreement (TFA) \$420 million
- 2012 Norske Skog Federal government grant \$28 million
- 2013 Federal Government compensation to Ta Ann Tasmania \$26 million
- 2014 Federal Government grant to Ta Ann Tasmania \$7.5 million
- **The greed:** Tasmania's state-owned logging agency Suss Timber Tasmania continues to have legislated access to log another area of nearly a million hectares of public state forests. (And it still can't turn a profit.) Despite managing this 800,000 hectares of 'permanent timber production' - ie, state forests, the Tasmanian Liberal Government is now adding 356,000 hectares, an increase of about 40%.

Logging now expands from the established production forests into the converted reserves. In a climate, extinction and bushfire crisis, that is simply immoral.

- **Secret deals:** A Right To Information request from December 2019 revealed that the Government and logging industry had already been discussing logging between 60,000 to 120,000 hectares of these threatened converted reserves. After April 8 this year, any or all of this area could be eligible for logging.
- **More secrecy:** If the public are surprised that High Conservation Value forests destined to be permanently-protected nature reserves are actually under renewed threat from the chainsaws, it is because the loggers and government conspired to keep the threat under the radar and made false assurances that none of these forests have been formally put forward for logging. The fact is that industry has been in discussions about logging these forests for years. They know that formal designation for logging is the final step and want to get there before the

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alarm is raised and community opposition gets in the way.

- **Commercial madness:** Wood logged from High Conservation Value forested nature converted reserves makes little commercial sense. Coming from HCV forests that were intended to be protected will be commercially toxic and seen as unethical by consumers, producers, buyers, markets and investors. Trying to sell unethical wood will take Tasmania's forestry industry backwards and will undermine Tasmania's globally-recognised brand at a time when it is attempting to re-engage with global markets post the coronavirus. Furthermore the logging of these converted forests will undermine community cohesion by reintroducing conflict.
- **The decision-makers:** Ultimately, this terrible policy sits with Tasmania's 'Premier for Climate Change', Peter Gutwein. But the two ministers who can sign-off on the logging of these converted reserves are the minister responsible for Crown Lands, Roger Jaensch,

and minister for logging, Guy Barnett. Yes, they could even end up signing off on logging the converted reserves in their own electorates. The other critical decision makers are members of Tasmania's Upper House, the Legislative Council, who have to accept or reject the logging - or not - of these converted reserves.

## Good policy

- **It's the forests stupid:** The single best way to attack climate change, protect species and reduce Tasmania's bushfire risk is to protect existing native forests and restore degraded forests. In 2020, the world has never needed forests more than now. Logging these forested converted nature reserves would be as ecocidal as it would be immoral.
- **Protection:** The public bought these forest converted reserves from the logging industry for over \$420 million dollars to protect them, not log them. Permanent protection is what needs to happen and what Tasmania and the global environment needs.

- **The future:** Ending native forest logging and transitioning the industry to a plantation-based Forest Stewardship Council certified model will provide job and resource security and greater sustainability outcomes, and leave natives forests to do the heavy lifting of carbon sequestration, species protection, water-cycle protection, bushfire protection and provide natural, life-enhancing cathedrals of wonder for us all.

