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Tasmanian RFA Review  
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### **Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement Third Five-Yearly Review 2012**

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) is the peak national body for Australia's forest, wood and paper products industry. We represent the industry's interests to governments, the general public and other stakeholders on matters relating to the sustainable development and use of Australia's forest, wood and paper products.

AFPA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 2007 - 2012*.

AFPA would like to commend the Tasmanian and Australian Governments on their commitment to the RFA process and progress with the *Tasmanian RFA Third Five-Yearly Review*, recognising the delay is due to the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement (TCFA) and Tasmanian Forest Agreement (TFA) processes. The industry appreciates the comment that the *Tasmanian and Australian Government's commitment to ensuring the RFA is durable and continues to deliver effective sustainable forest management, forest industry and environmental outcomes*.

The report for the third five-yearly review clearly demonstrates the Tasmanian and Australian Government's determination to meet their obligations under the RFA and continuing commitment to the process. The reviewer's report indicates that all of the RFA Commitments and Milestones set out in the Tasmanian RFA have either been completed or are ongoing commitments that have been achieved to the point at which they were assessed.

AFPFA would emphasise that it is critically important that the RFA continues to deliver on economic, social and environmental outcomes, particularly the maintenance of investment certainty for internationally competitive forest based industries. In addition, AFPFA notes that the Tasmanian RFA process undertook a scientifically rigorous assessment of Tasmania's forests, through the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA), leading to the establishment of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system.

We acknowledge that the RFA represents a much better regulatory mechanism than the export controls and *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* approval process that were required before the RFA was introduced. In addition, the RFA and the CAR Reserve System provide an important framework for underpinning forest certification.

AFPFA agree that the Tasmanian RFA is the right mechanism to balance the competing economic, environmental and social demands on Tasmania's forests into the future.

The forest industry was encouraged by comment in the summary document indicating the Tasmanian and Australian Government's commitment to establish a mechanism to extend the RFA.

It is vital to the forest industry, and the regional communities that depend upon it, that the Tasmanian RFA continues to provide a level of certainty of resource supply. AFPFA strongly supports the Tasmanian and Australian Government plan to establish a 20-year rolling life for the Tasmanian RFA, based on a five year review model. This approach recognises the substantial investment in scientific and technical studies underpinning the original RFAs and, at the same time, provides for adaptive management through periodic monitoring and review.

The comprehensive and adaptive policy approach taken in the RFA has provided a stable and solid foundation for the protection of biodiversity in Tasmania for more

than 15 years. This should continue. However, future periodic reviews should focus not just on environmental outcomes inside the forest area managed for wood production, but should assess the performance across all land tenures. With around 60% of public forests in Tasmania now held conservation reserves that form the CAR forest reserve system and excluded from wood production, it is important that these reserved areas are regularly monitored to ensure the values for which they were reserved are being maintained.

The economic and social health of the forest industry and communities dependent on the industry are equally important. The RFA also aimed to provide the investment certainty needed for internationally competitive timber and forest based industry. Therefore, future RFA reviews should give equal weight to economic and social objectives, such as annual investment in upgrading existing and developing new processing capacity, forest industry employment, and the economic health of communities dependent on forest industries.

Recognising that the Tasmanian RFA will end in 2017, we encourage the parties to finalise this review without delay and put in place the mechanism for a 20 year rolling renewal of the RFA. This will provide the certainty of resource supply necessary to support investment, enable the existing industry to remain competitive, and encourage innovation and further value-adding.

Thank you of the opportunity to comment on the review report. If you require further information on these comments, please call Peter Grist (Manager - Resources) on 02 6285 3833 or email [peter.grist@ausfpa.com.au](mailto:peter.grist@ausfpa.com.au).

Yours sincerely



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