

18 October 2021

Department of State Growth
Skills Tasmania (TasTAFE Transition Project)
Hobart TAS 7001

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TFPA Submission: TasTAFE Transition Draft Legislation

Tasmania's forest industry is unique in many ways. It is based on a renewable resource that sequesters carbon. The industry employs over 5,000 direct and indirect jobs in rural and regional areas and in major cities.

The future growth and development of the forest industry is dependent on the capacity, skill, safety and stability of its workforce. Part of this growth and development is having stable and certain vocational education and training providers.

As an industry we have a range of businesses that need a variety of skills in growing and harvesting trees, processing wood and wood fibre, manufacturing pulp, paper and engineered, reconstituted and solid wood products, and businesses that export, import, wholesale and retail forest products.

The Tasmanian Forest and Forest Products (TFPA) is the peak body for forestry that undertakes policy development, lobbying and advocacy for members interests. TFPA represents all elements of the value chain from the sustainable harvesting of plantations and multiple use natural forest resource including forest establishment and management, harvesting and haulage, processing of timber resources and manufacture of pulp, paper and bioproducts.

The TFPA is supportive of the TasTAFE transition based on that it will become a future-focused and market-aligned training provider that is responsive to the needs of Tasmanian learners, employers and industries, and provides more Tasmanians with the skills they need to get jobs now and into the future.

Direct forestry related courses currently offered at TasTAFE are limited, however we see significant value in the prospect of partnership compacts which facilitate tailored systems and supports to meet the needs of industries, TasTAFE and of students who are looking to make, establish or advance their careers.

We see value in TasTAFE pursuing partnerships with other RTOs who have a forestry focus, like Timber Training Creswick, and industry bodies like Arbre Forest Industries Training and Careers Hub.

Unfortunately, enrolments in the forest sector related vocational qualifications more than halved between 2015 and 2019, from around 3090 enrolments in 2015 to around 1500 enrolments in

2019¹. The decrease is due in part to the work that forestry workers undertake, which includes long hours during peak times and remoteness. The drop in enrolments also relates to the cost, time and location of undertaking and accessing training, particularly for smaller operators.

The TFPA are encouraged that the proposed changes for TasTAFE say it will enable training to be delivered at times that better meet learners' needs and provide TasTAFE with more autonomy and flexibility so that it can work more closely with industry and employers.

We must see TasTAFE providing a presence in rural, remote and outer regional areas, delivering to those outside the major cities and is supported to deliver training where the private market simply cannot.

An important part of the transition is making sure current TasTAFE employees are assisted from one industrial relations model to the Fair Work model. A big part of the transition should be that employees are not worse off under the new business model.

The TFPA look forward to collaboratively working with TasTAFE in future training programs and initiatives that support our members with their workforce development requirements.

We want to see TasTAFE as an extension of industry not separate from it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Steel', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nick Steel
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Anderson, NM, H Stewart and RJ Keenan. 2020. Culture, Training and Skills Assessment Report. Prepared for the North-North West Tasmania Regional Forestry Hub. 17 November 2020. School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences, Faculty of Science, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.