

2 February 2024

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment & Water
EPBC Macquarie Harbour Public Consultation
John Gorton Building - King Edward Terrace
Parkes ACT 2600

**TFPA Submission - Decision on validity of Request for Reconsideration of Referral Decision:
Marine Farming Expansion, Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania (EPBC 2012/6406)**

The Tasmanian Forest Products Association (TFPA) welcomes the opportunity to make comment to the review into the marine farming expansion in Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania.

The 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 supports the Tasmanian salmon industry in this review, which we believe has been influenced by radical green environmental groups, hell-bent on closing all industry in Tasmania.

As part of this review, the TFPA urges the following points be considered:

1. Reviews should be considered against hard evidence, not emotional rhetoric.

When decision-making takes place on reviews, such as with the Marine Farming Expansion, Macquarie Harbour review, government must weigh up the cold, hard facts when handing down a decision. Governments must also weigh up the value of baseless rhetoric often spouted by activist campaigners, which hold little or no factual basis.

For example, the activists against farming of salmon in Macquarie Harbour have claimed that protection of an endangered fish – the Maugean skate - is the reason farming should stop. They claim fish farming is driving the species to extinction.

But typical of activist campaigns, they have never acknowledged that the Maugean skate has disappeared from nearby Bathurst Harbour - where there has never been an aquaculture industry. There is little doubt this would show that a range of other factors, apart from salmon aquaculture, are the major drivers of the skate's decline.

Similarly, in forestry, perpetual green campaigner, Bob Brown recently sent the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, a 1.3 second clip of the call of the swift parrot, recorded from an active logging coupe.

While there was no evidence the bird was in fact in the coupe itself, Mr Brown somewhat overreached, calling the recording “one of the most poignant recordings in Australia’s natural history”.

The obvious flaw in Dr Brown’s incorrect statement is that responsible harvesting and regenerating small patches of forest cannot be held solely responsible for the decline of a species that migrates each year to mainland Australia and is subject to predation by introduced sugar gliders while breeding in Tasmania.

Nevertheless, Tasmanian forestry authorities have already substantially modified timber production plans and practices to minimise impacts to the swift parrot, including ending timber harvesting altogether on Bruny Island which is recognised as a key breeding ground.

These are examples of the facts that need to be examined when reviewing legal business operations that are called in for review.

2. Reviews should include the relevant industry in decision making.

When reviews are conducted into legal business operations called in for government examination, it should form part of that review that the potentially impacted industry is routinely involved in the decision-making process.

For example, in forestry, the impact of timber production on wildlife conservation has been managed at a landscape-level. By doing so, government and industry are able to ensure that any impacts incurred on harvesting sites were overwhelmingly diluted by the vast majority of forests where wildlife occurs are held in reserves and not subject to logging.

The protection of vast swathes of forests in Tasmania forms the base of biodiversity conservation and, accordingly, it has been appropriate for forestry practices to minimise adverse wildlife impacts during timber harvesting, rather than to try to totally avoid them.

For an alternate view of how to manage reviews without industry involvement, we just need to look at the forestry industry in Victoria.

In that state, eco-activists’ demand that every rare, threatened, or endangered animal or plant be effectively guaranteed protection on timber harvesting sites has increasingly infiltrated the environmental bureaucracy, ultimately finding its way into government policy.

This trend was accelerated by a series of legal challenges by activists against the government’s forestry agency, VicForests, which ended forestry in Victoria and cost the state hundred of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

3. Impacts on the local community and economy should also be taken into account.

When considering the future of any industry, balance is the key. Here in Tasmania, we know that land management is a balancing act – weighing up the needs of the environment, the community and the economy.

If one of these key metrics are out of whack, much like a three-legged stool, it will fall over. And our state successfully shows the world how that balance works in real life.

For an example, to achieve that three-legged stool balance, we need to understand how Tasmania's forestry industry supports our communities and our state's wealth. Discounting the value we give to our communities and lifestyle doesn't tell the whole story.

While most of the state's forests are protected, those that are used for forestry make a huge difference to our community and our economy.

Forestry creates jobs, especially in rural communities. Our forestry businesses allow families to stay in the communities they grew up in, providing an income for thousands of local Tasmanians, in the places their families and support networks are.

In fact, over 5,000 people in Tasmania are employed by forestry either directly or indirectly. Our jobs are not just in the harvesting of trees. We employ nursery workers, transport companies and environmental experts as part of our daily work. And that doesn't include the thousands of workers who can support themselves in our forestry communities.

Supermarkets, childcare, schools, restaurants, plumbers and electricians are just some of the jobs that are created in rural and regional Tasmania when forestry jobs exist.

And Tasmanian forestry is great for our state's economy. In the latest reporting period, the direct value of output by the Tasmanian forest industry at the point of sale of primary processed products was \$712 million. This figure rises to more than \$1.2 billion when considering the flow-on-effects generated in other industries as a result of spending by the forest industry.

Forestry is a cornerstone of sustainable economic development in Tasmania, offering a myriad of direct and indirect benefits to our community.

Its role in job creation, revenue generation, industrial support, ecosystem services, and tourism underscores its significant contribution to economic prosperity and the overall well-being of the state.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the TFPA urges the government to consider the following when reviewing both the Macquarie Harbour fish farming applications as well as other land and water use applications:

1. Decisions and reviews should be considered again hard evidence, not emotional rhetoric.
2. Decisions and reviews should include the relevant industry in decision making. This ensures a workable outcome, as opposed the complete shuttering of important local businesses.
3. While environmental concerns are important, impacts on the local community and economy should also be taken into account.

I look forward to further discussing the review into the marine farming expansion in Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania, as the process of decision making and implementation is undertaken.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Steel
Chief Executive Officer