



**TASMANIAN COMMUNITY
FOREST AGREEMENT**

**RESEARCH INTO
ALTERNATIVES TO
CLEARFELLING IN OLD
GROWTH FORESTS**

OPERATING PLAN



Australian Government



Tasmania

Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to set out operating arrangements for the implementation of the Australian Government's commitment in the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement (TCFA) to invest \$2 million to research alternatives to clearfelling old growth forests in Tasmania.

Background

TCFA commits the Australian and Tasmanian Governments to cooperate in a programme to facilitate a significant reduction in the use of clearfell harvesting in old growth forests. The aim is to phase in non-clearfelling techniques so that, by 2010, no more than 20% of the area of old growth forest harvested each year in Tasmania will be clearfelled, compared with 50% at present.

Clause 30 commits the governments to jointly fund a package of forest operations and management, industry development and research and development activities. Clause 76(i) commits the Australian Government to a contribution of \$2 million towards research into alternatives to clearfelling. This supplements the \$11.1 million being invested by Tasmania in further research and implementation, including training and support for harvesting contractors. From this \$11.1m, Tasmania is contributing \$0.4m to the segment of this programme being jointly managed with the Australian Government. The joint investment will facilitate acceleration of the current research programme based at Warra in Southern Tasmania, and will enable its expansion into other forest types in other parts of the state.

This programme effectively complements separate TCFA investments in intensive forest management and hardwood industry development.

Objective

The objective of the programme is to identify, commission and report on research into and operational trials of alternatives to clearfelling old growth forests in Tasmania.

Desired Outcomes/Benefits

The desired outcomes of the programme are:

1. Assurance that alternative silvicultural approaches in old growth forests are supported by sound science;
2. A contribution to Forestry Tasmania's capacity to meet TCFA's target of capping clearfelling in old growth forests at 20% of the harvestable area by 2010;
3. Help Forestry Tasmania to maintain industry access to a minimum sustainable yield of 300,000m³ per annum; and

4. In so doing, help the industry to enhance the value of its outputs and maintain existing employment levels.

Key Outputs/Milestones

Direct outputs of the programme will include:

- a) An accelerated research and field trials programme, including economic analysis (see Attachment A);
- b) A communication strategy for consideration by Ministers;
- c) Assistance to Forestry Tasmania in convening a panel of international experts in forest conservation and management;
- d) An international conference as part of a review of the Warra-based research programme and recommendations on future directions;
- e) Annual reporting to Ministers;
- f) A review and formal evaluation of the programme and final report to Ministers;

Related Outputs

In addition to the \$2.4m provided for this programme of research and extension by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments, Tasmania is investing a further \$10.7m into a broad range of activities designed to develop and implement silvicultural improvements and to deal with OH&S and other operational issues. These activities will include

Activity	Timing
Operational extension of variable retention trials on State forest across Tasmania	2005-2010
Review of safety issues	2006
Workforce training	2006-2010

Project Management

Governance

The project's governance framework will be headed by a high-level, joint Australian and Tasmanian Government implementation committee (IC).

Implementation Committee:

Dr Hans Drielsma, Executive General Manager, Forestry Tasmania
 Mr Tony Bartlett, General Manager, Forest Industries, Department of Agriculture,
 Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), Australian Government

The IC has primary responsibility for developing this plan and annual progress reports for the consideration of Ministers. It will also oversee the work of the Technical Support Group, and manage the provision of information to stakeholders. The IC will also design, implement and report to Ministers on the final review and evaluation of the programme.

It is proposed that the IC be supported by a **Technical Support Group** as follows:

Mr John Hickey, Forestry Tasmania
 Mr John Davidson, Bureau of Rural Sciences
 Dr Steve Read, Forestry Tasmania
 Mr Mark Neyland, Forestry Tasmania

The Technical Support Group will be responsible for:

- analysing and providing advice to the IC on research and extension outputs as they are finalised;
- supporting the review of the Warra research programme and helping to convene the 2007 International Conference for this purpose; and
- drafting annual activity reports for consideration by IC and provision to Ministers;

Consultation

The IC will ensure that key stakeholders are kept informed of progress with this programme. Key stakeholders include

- Forestry and Forest Industries Council of Tasmania;
- Timber Communities Australia;
- CRC for Sustainable Forest Landscapes; and
- Tasmanian Conservation Trust

Reporting

The Implementation Committee will report to Ministers by 31 August 2006 on 2005-06 achievements and activities under the research and field trials programme or other activities. Subsequent reports to Ministers will be through overall TCFA Annual Reports on Implementation.

A representative of the Technical Support Group will provide updates on research and field trial projects to meetings of the IC.

Normal agency budget and operational reporting protocols will also be adhered to.

Budget and Expenditure

The Australian Government has allocated \$2 million to the programme in 2005-06, with Tasmania adding \$0.4million in 2006-07 from its overall budget of \$11.1million.

The expenditure of these funds will be determined by the IC in accordance with the research plan.

It is proposed that the Australian Government's contribution of \$2 million be paid to Forestry Tasmania following the agreement by Ministers to this plan.

These funds will be acquitted as part of the annual reporting to Ministers.

Communications Strategy

An ongoing communications strategy for the project will be developed. Communication activities will focus on well timed and regular announcements of key milestones and outcomes as well as stakeholder communication and management. Key communication opportunities and events may include:

- Ministers announce details of the initial plan, including the research and field trials programme;
- Regular information sessions for identified key stakeholders;
- Ministers periodically announce progress with the programme;
- Ministers comment on outcomes from the International Conference/Review of the Warra Research;
- At the end of the programme, Ministers announce the results and any further steps in implementation.

Programme Activities and Milestones

Proposed milestones for the Alternatives to Clearfelling programme are:

December 2005/January 2006	Payment to Forestry Tasmania of the Australian Government's \$2m contribution following approval of this plan by Ministers
January/February 2006	Commencement of the research and field trial programme;
February/May 2006	Appointment of a Panel of Experts by Forestry Tasmania
August 2006	Report to Ministers on 2005-06 achievements, including first acquittal of programme funds
September 2007	International conference to incorporate review and outcomes of the Warra-based research;
August 2007, 2008 and 2009	Annual reports and funds acquittals to Ministers
2009-10	Review and formal evaluation of programme and final report to Ministers

Risk Management

Risk	Treatment	Likelihood	Impact
Research fails to produce cost-effective alternatives.	Focus research on most practical options identified by FT research and operational experience to date, plus advice from the expert panel/international conference.	Low	Severe
Skills shortages lead to delays in completion of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports include forecast of possible impediments to achieving timelines; • Organisations involved in the research will have sufficient skilled personnel. 	Low	Moderate to high
Lack of industry and stakeholder confidence regarding the likely achievement of programme goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest quality scientists engaged; • Strong focus on operational trials involving skilled contractors; • Maintain good information flow to industry and other stakeholders; • Public annual reporting of progress 	Low	Severe

PLAN OF RESEARCH AND FIELD TRIALS

Item	Description	Commencement	Completion
Silviculture			
Engage researcher in variable retention (VR) silviculture	Task would be to facilitate and monitor outcomes from operational VR coupes and facilitate the identification and development of best practices	January 2006	December 2010
Visit by operational expert in VR from Pacific North-West (ie Canada?)	Provide advice on best practice solutions from VR implementation in the Pacific North-West	January 2006	April 2006
Development of updated VR silviculture and thinning manuals	Involves a preliminary silviculture manual to guide harvesting and regeneration practices at initial trial sites. Progresses to final, comprehensive manual arising from experience during the program, to be accompanied by a revised thinning manual	January 2006	January 2010
Visit by key research/operational staff to VR management areas in Pacific North-West	Will enable access to best practice examples in : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, harvesting and site operation; and • Biodiversity monitoring 	July 2006	Nov 2006
<i>Silviculture Budget</i>	<i>\$0.78 million</i>		

Item	Description	Commencement	Completion
Biodiversity			
Engage biodiversity researcher for VR-related issues	Will coordinate analyses of biodiversity responses to Warra trials and evaluate habitat in VR coupes for birds and hollow-dwelling mammals	January 2006	December 2008
Engage data manager for Warra site	Curate data for silvicultural systems trial, set up metadata base, facilitate data storage and retrieval	January 2006	December 2010
Biodiversity Assessment	Complete 1- and 3-year post-harvest biodiversity assessments at Warra site	January 2006	December 2008
<i>Biodiversity Budget</i>	<i>\$0.76 million</i>		
Forest Health			
Assessing health and integrity of aggregates at age three*	Forest health surveillance to ground check aerial surveys	January 2007	June 2007
Assessing risk to landscape from incomplete burning of VR coupes*	Develop existing work and combine with Warra site data and experience from operational coupes	July 2006	June 2007
Assessing VR browsing risks*	Additional assessment work required	July 2006	June 2007
<i>Forest Health Budget:</i>	<i>\$0.12 million</i>		
Safety			
Evaluation of a range of trial sites*	Employment of a consultant for a detailed review and evaluation of these sites	January 2006	June 2007

Item	Description	Commencement	Completion
Safety (cont)			
Harvesting technology improvement	Review of technology improvements that may facilitate safe, cost effective VR harvesting	July 2006	June 2007
Safety Budget:	\$0.08 million		
Productivity			
Timber yield modelling*	Will compare VR trial plot regrowth yields with those from “normal” silviculture regrowth	July 2006	June 2007
Long term soil impacts*	Aim is to compare 2001 and 2006 soil chemical and physical properties on the same clearfell site to determine whether lower intensity burning is warranted	July 2006	June 2007
Productivity Budget:	\$0.08 million		
Social and Economic			
Economic evaluation of operational VR coupes*	Review of cost data, including unit costs to growers, contractors and processors, with net present value analyses	July 2006	June 2007
Implications of VR for the Leatherwood resource*	Beekeeping consultancy	July 2006	June 2007
Research high value markets for old growth timber*	Economic consultancy	July 2006	June 2007

Item	Description	Commencement	Completion
Social and Economic (cont)			
Social acceptability study	Social consultancy undertaken by University of Melbourne	January 2006	December 2009
Public engagement	Interpretation of the Warra trials	July 2006	June 2007
<i>Social and Economic Budget</i>	<i>\$0.18 million</i>		
Review			
Review of Warra Research Program	Will include conference of internationally recognised experts in forest and conservation science	January 2007	September 2007
<i>Warra Review Budget</i>	<i>\$0.4 million</i>		
OVERALL RESEARCH AND FIELD TRIALS BUDGET	\$2.4 million		

*To be written up for September 2007 International Conference