

Rebuilding the Forest Industry
- Cracking down on illegal protestors

Building a Tasmania we
can all be proud of



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The Plan to build a modern economy,
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Rebuilding the Forest Industry

Forestry is one of Tasmania's key competitive advantages. We grow trees better than just about anywhere; we have a long and proud history of sustainably harvesting them, and we are geographically close to the key, growing Asian markets.

As an industry, forestry is critical to Tasmania's future, currently directly employing more than 3,400 Tasmanians*, and thousands of more jobs indirectly*.

Before being strangled by the Labor-Green forest deal process, it provided more than \$1.4 billion** to the State's economy, generating vital wealth and jobs for our State, particularly our regional communities.

The Liberals' plan for forestry will deliver a vibrant, job rich and sustainable forestry industry, operating to the world's highest environmental standards.

It will be based around innovation and value-adding, and providing room for growth and opportunities into the future.

We don't want to go back to the past; the era of forestry underpinned in the main by woodchip exports has finished.

Instead, our plan is about encouraging and supporting investment in innovation and new uses for our timber so that we can grow the industry into the future, and capturing new export markets whilst creating stronger on-island uses for our wood – such as through engineered timbers, biofuels and bioenergy.

Our plan is about ensuring we have enough timber to sustain our iconic high-value craft and wooden boat building sector.

And our plan is about supporting and valuing the contribution made by family-owned, third or fourth generation sawmillers – not paying them money to shut down.

Importantly, we understand that our native timber resources are a valuable commodity and we will ensure that all Tasmanians get a fair dividend from the resource.

We want a forest industry we can all be proud of, and support.

* Jacki Schirmer, "The Conversation" <http://theconversation.edu.au/still-here-why-tasmanian-forest-industry-job-figures-are-misleading-10827>.

** "Sawlog quote clipped", Bruce Felmingham, Sunday Tasmanian 25/11/12.

Toughening the law to protect lawful businesses in Tasmania

The Liberals believe that the best way to stop unlawful market attacks by Green groups is not to try and appease them; it's to toughen the law to deter them.

- Cracking down on illegal and dangerous protests in our forests

Illegal protests not only prevent people from going about their lawful business, they are often dangerous to both workers and protestors alike.

The Liberals will always support the right to free speech and the right to peaceful and lawful protest. But we cannot support the continued invasion of our workplaces.

As has been shown by the disastrous forest deal, you can't stop illegal and dangerous protests by trying to appease the Greens and environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS).

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will crack down on illegal and dangerous protests in our forest and workplaces by increasing the penalties for illegally interfering with a workplace with the intent of obstructing work.

Despite claims by Labor, the introduction of the new *Workplace Health and Safety Act* in 2013 has failed to deal with this crucial issue, and, tellingly, there has not been a single prosecution of forest protestors under it.

The Liberals will send a clear message that it's just not acceptable to invade workplaces by legislating to:

- Introduce a new indictable offence of invading or impeding access to a workplace, with on the spot fines of up to \$10,000 for an individual, and up to \$100,000 for corporations that incite or encourage this illegal behaviour;
- Mandate a minimum 3 months imprisonment for second and subsequent convictions for invading or impeding access to a workplace;
- Mandate the automatic recording of a criminal conviction if an offence is proven;
- Have offenders pay for the for damage and/or economic loss their actions cause;
- Introduce a new indictable offence of intentional damage caused to premises or equipment, with fines of up to \$50,000, or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 5 years, or both, for an individual, and up to \$250,000 for a corporation that incites or encourages this illegal behaviour; and
- As a matter of public policy, instruct police and emergency services to recover the costs of dealing with illegal protest activity.

Protected industrial action under the *Fair Work Act* is exempt from the "impeding access to a workplace" provisions.

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Return to business the right to sue

The Liberals will also return to businesses the right to seek legal remedies against groups such as Green groups and ENGOS, that disseminate false and misleading information about their company, and its operations.

Over recent years we have seen Green groups and ENGOs run damaging campaigns of misinformation against Tasmanian forestry companies, such as Gunns and Ta Ann, acting with complete impunity.

These actions have resulted in damage to the reputations of those companies, and the broader Tasmanian brand, and, worse, have also cost many Tasmanian jobs. In the case of Ta Ann, more than 40 Tasmanians lost their jobs as a result of this damaging misinformation.

In 2005 State Labor amended defamation laws to remove the right of companies to sue over false and misleading claims, preventing companies with more than 10 employees from suing.

We will return this right to companies by amending the *Defamation Act (2005)*.

The Liberals will always support the right to free speech but that right to free speech needs to be balanced by the opportunity to challenge clearly false and misleading claims.

We will also work closely with the Federal Government in relation to matters such as truth in advertising, secondary boycotts, market campaigns and ensuring that environmental or community organisations that act illegally in relation to protest and activist type behaviours are no longer supported by the taxpayer through concessional taxation treatment.

The failed Labor-Green Forest Deal

The Labor-Green Forest Deal, just like all the other so-called forest “peace” deals before it, has already failed.

Before the ink was even dry on the legislation, key environmental figures such as Federal Greens Leader Christine Milne, former leaders Bob Brown and Peg Putt (now of Markets for Change), and other activists have sworn to not only continue, but ramp up the protests and the attacks on our markets overseas.

And let’s not forget all the other things that the Deal promised, but hasn’t delivered:

- A “social licence” for the pulp mill (“For agreement to be reached on putting any further trees in HCV reserves, there has to be a pulp mill as part of it”, Lara Giddings, 24/3/11);
- The reopening of the Triabunna chip-mill - now never to reopen;
- A legislated minimum sawlog supply of 155,000m³ per year (is now 137,000m³);

- 12,500m³ per year of speciality timber (speciality timber industry will be gutted under Deal); and
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification (the Deal doesn't guarantee FSC, in fact, its unlikely to deliver it).

The consequences: thousands of job losses - with hundreds more to come[^]; our forest industry turned into a cottage industry; regional communities devastated; and more than 52 per cent of our State locked up.

[^] "Key Socio-Economic Impacts in Transitioning to Wood Supply Agreements Detailed in Tasmanian Forest Agreement", February 2013.

Costings

Nil

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