

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY LABOR MEMBERS

1.1 Labor Senators note the statement by Tasmanian Resources Minister, Bryan Green, on 30 August 2004, which announced significant changes to the Tasmanian forest practices system.

1.2 Minister Green's statement includes the following positive initiatives to be implemented by the Tasmanian Government:

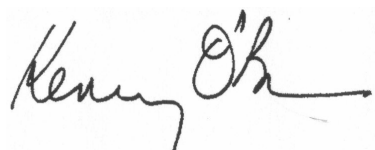
- Removal of the exemption for Forestry Tasmania under the Freedom of Information Act.
- An undertaking to introduce legislation into the Tasmanian Parliament later this year to overhaul the Forest Practices Board, creating a new organisation to be known as the Forest Practices Authority.

1.3 According to Minister Green's statement:

- The Forest Practices Authority will have an independent chair and include people with expertise in environmental or natural resource management, conservation, sustainable forest management, community liaison and local government.
- The Tasmanian government will provide of an extra \$226,000 per year to the Forest Practices Authority to fund two new positions for the Authority to increase its capacity to investigate alleged breaches of the Forest Practices Code and to improve public information and understanding of the system.
- Four new Forest Practice Authority officers (to be funded by a user pay system based on fees for all Forest Practices Plans) will be appointed to provide independent 'on the ground' monitoring of forest practices, as well as increasing awareness amongst forest workers of the requirements of the Code.
- Maximum penalties for breaches of the Forest Practices Code will be increased from \$15,000 to \$100,000 and the statute of limitations will be extended from one year to three years.
- The Registrar of the Forest Practices Tribunal will be separated from the Forest Practices Authority.
- \$400,000 will be committed over three years for an education and training program to be delivered through the Tasmanian Forest Industry Training Board (TFITB).

1.4 Although the Committee was finalising this report at the time of Minister Green's announcement, and has not had time to fully consider the impact of the initiatives contained therein, Labor Senators are of the view that these initiatives will go some considerable way to addressing the findings of this Committee and the concerns of the Tasmanian and broader communities.

1.5 Labor Senators believe the Committee should monitor the implementation and progress of these initiatives, the outcomes of which may be relevant to any further inquiry of this Committee, as described in Recommendation 13.



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