

# “In Support of Progress” Newsletter

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## ***Forest staffing***

Readers will be pleased to note that 60 new positions are to be created to manage the forest lands removed from production forestry under the Forest Agreement.

On 20 August, DPIPWE head Kim Evans sent a note to colleagues advising of this fact:

*Over recent months the Parks and Wildlife Service has been looking at the responsibilities and requirements for managing this increased estate and the number and types of additional staff that will be required. From this planning it has been identified 54 new positions within the Parks and Wildlife Service and six in the corporate area will be required.*

Four days later, the department called for tenders to undertake an audit of assets:

*Tenders are being sought to undertake an audit of assets within lands managed by Forestry Tasmania to potentially be transferred to Parks and Wildlife Service management, General Manager Parks and Wildlife Service Peter Mooney said today.*

*Mr Mooney said the audit, which would be conducted with Forestry Tasmania, would focus on future reserve land identified through the Tasmanian Forests Agreement.*

Why a separate audit? This is simply a transfer of assets between two government agencies. A separate audit suggests either that the assets presently owned by FT are not known to FT, that FT is not trusted by DPIPWE, or that DPIPWE cannot do its own audit. I find any of these propositions to be ridiculous, and the audit tender a waste of time and money.

These 60 positions are essentially going to be transferred from the profit centre of FT to the cost centre of DPIPWE, so a further hit to the budget bottom line.

More relevant however, is that the positions are dependent on the Tasmanian Forest Agreement holding. The Liberals have stated they will rip up that agreement, and the Liberals are in with a real chance at this election.

Maybe any such decision should await the outcome of the Federal election before too much effort goes in to building bureaucratic empires.

And if the Liberals do win, and the agreement discarded, the conservationists have vowed to return to their protest paradigm. If that is the case, maybe we will need 60 more police officers, rather than Parks officers, to manage the inevitable return to conflict.

### **Parliamentary maneuverings**

Under the Forest Agreement Act, forest areas to be reserved first need to be the subject of a notice in the Government Gazette. Such a notice has been laid on the table of the house. A motion to disallow the notice within a period of time has the effect of blocking, delaying such a move, and such a motion has been placed before the Legislative Council

To get around this blocking move, the government has now put forward a motion to allow the notice to proceed. This is in fact a high risk strategy as an even vote on the government's motion would then fail..

The Legislative Council is evenly divided over this issue. By convention a motion that has an equal vote for and against it fails. If that happens, then a motion to allow the notice will fail and the notice will be disallowed. Similarly, a notice to disallow the motion will fail and the notice will go forward. As you can see it is all in the wording of the motion.

Over and beyond these moves, the Liberals have said that if they win on September 7 they will tear up the Agreement.

There will be costs associated with a decision not to proceed with the reserves. Tasmanian taxpayers could well ask the question "Who will meet these costs?"

A decision by the State parliament to disallow the notice could well place the cost burden on the state. A decision by the Federal Government to do so should then place the cost burden on the Commonwealth.

Irrespective of one's view whether the notice should be allowed or disallowed, prudence would suggest that any decision by the State parliament should await the outcome of the Federal election.

### **Hospital Costs**

Feedback on the comment in the last newsletter suggests that the delays and accompanying cost blowouts are being caused by an ever-changing scoping of the project, and an unclear picture of what is required. Again, it requires a much stronger management approach than what has been apparent up until now.

I suspect they would not be as wooly if it was their own money!



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