

“In Support of Progress” A Newsletter

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FORESTRY

Today, the IGA negotiators have advised they have reached an agreement. Well, not exactly an agreement, but an interim agreement, subject to well, what exactly?

After 2 years of argie bargie, this interim agreement does not include the two fundamental issues, sustainable wood supply and increased reserve areas. And this interim agreement is interesting for what it doesn't contain.

Remember the call for the protection of "high conservation value" forests, this undefined term which was a consideration of the Statement of Principles and of the IGA.

No mention of HCV now. Now it is ICV, with "I" standing for "important", whatever that means. So does this mean that the IGA is now "off the table"? Have the boundaries changed once again?

This is not an agreement, other than an agreement to agree that they might agree to something sometime in the future.

This is the third deadline that has not been met, and they have now set a fourth deadline, some 4-6 weeks away, which also will in all probability not be met. Laughable, except for the fact that "out there" there is so much pain. "Out there", real people are really hurting. And that is the real tragedy of this fundamentally flawed process.

This process, if successful, will also deny the Tasmanian community hundreds of millions of dollars every year into the future. That also means millions of dollars of GST receipts. Just a small percentage of those receipts would easily cover some subsidisation in the short term while markets are re-established as they undoubtedly can as the economies of China and India grow. Stop thinking about how to compensate the thousands of workers that are now without jobs and start thinking about how to keep the jobs and get people back to work.

This interim agreement also exposes three other "smoking guns".

1. It refers to the establishment of further reserves - as yet undefined to have World Heritage" and "National Park" status. So farewell to the concept of "multi-use".

2. The active role of the ENGO's brings into the harsh light of scrutiny the fact that they are no longer environmental charities, but fully functional political lobby groups and market activists. And as such, there now needs to be a review of their charitable status, and of their protection from the due processes of the law eg defamation etc..

3. It gives absolutely no consideration to other interest groups who are not at the table eg farmers, miners.

Participants in the process are referring publicly to the fact that this interim agreement "provides the opportunity to "road test" many agreed elements of a potential future final agreement", and for "an excellent up -front "durability" test for the process and any final agreement".

How can such a comment be made without any specifics relating to land tenure or wood supply? After 2 years of negotiations, we are roadtesting some terms. Watching grass grow would be more rewarding. I am sure those in the room believe that this is a good outcome - my comment is they would seem to have fallen captive to the process. Readers may wish to google the "Stockholm Syndrome" for some further enlightenment.

The government states that the "interim agreement marks the end of the forest wars". Yet at exactly the same time, the Tarkine National Coalition has announced it will lobby prospective investors against investing in a mining project in the NW Forest area, and threatening a level of protest not seen since the Franklin. Miranda Gibson is still up her tree. So what on earth is the government on about?

There are parallels with an earlier time, when Chamberlain came back from Munich saying "Peace in our time", when the signs of continuing conflict were apparent everywhere.

The environmental groups are now "trading" FSC certification and reopening the Triabunna mill, in exchange for "peace". If FSC can now be provided, why could it not have been provided beforehand? It proves the FSC certification process to be a sham. And do they really have power over the owners of the Triabunna mill - an interesting admission, methinks.

What concessions have been offered by the conservationists? Name one!!!

This puts the lie to the suggestion that this is a negotiation. It is in fact a demand for a complete capitulation. And in support of this claim, note that there is in this agreement the suggestion that there could be a "voluntary and dignified" exit from the industry for sawmillers. What this really means is an attempt to reduce the wood supply requirement from 155,000 cub metres (from the original 300,000 cub metres) to an even lesser amount, in order to make the modelling fit the conservationists' unrelenting demands.

One hopes that these facts will become more apparent to the participants over the coming weeks.

This newsletter is supported by Tasman Management Services.



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