

The broadscale clearing of native forest is one of the most significant issues affecting Tasmania's natural environment. The Tasmanian and Australian governments have agreed on an approach to phase out clearing and conversion of native forest.

Permanent Native Forest Estate: Phasing out Clearing and Conversion of Native Forest

Under a revised Permanent Forest Estate Policy:

- an overall cap on clearing and conversion of native forest on both public and private land will be established to retain 95 per cent of the 1996 area of native forest;
- the clearing and conversion of native forests to plantations on public land will be phased out by 2010;
- broadscale clearing and conversion of native forest on private land will be phased out over a period of 10 years; and
- Tasmania's assessment criteria for regulating forest clearing and conversion will ensure the protection of regional biodiversity and water quality values and meet salinity objectives.

The implementation arrangements will be discussed with stakeholders over the next few months and the revised Permanent Forest Estate Policy will be released within six months of this announcement.

The phasing out of clearing of native forests will not constrain private forest owners from undertaking sustainable commercial native forest harvesting and regeneration on their land, or other land uses, such as grazing that retains the structure and species composition of the native forest communities in the long term.

The Australian Government's Forest Conservation Fund program for the voluntary purchase or covenanting of an additional 45,600 hectares of private forest, including 2,400 hectares at Mole Creek, will provide some landholders with alternatives to broadscale private forest clearing.

The Tasmanian Government will fund a private property Vegetation Conservation Program to promote conservation of private land. This program will support landholders in the protection of threatened native vegetation communities.

The agreed approach to phasing out clearing of Tasmanian native forests is an important component of the integrated package of reserve improvements, reduction in old-growth clear-felling and plantation development.

The new approach is consistent with the objectives of the *National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation*. Under the framework, Tasmania is committed to reverse the decline in the quality and extent of native vegetation and to limit clearance of native vegetation to those instances in which it can be clearly demonstrated that regional biodiversity objectives are not compromised.

¹ The 1996 extent of native forest vegetation is 3,207,250 hectares (Table 1 Attachment 1 of the Supplementary Agreement)