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Forest jobs and communities

Environment groups said today's release of a study on forestry employment highlights the urgent need for transformation within Tasmania's forest industry.

The report "Tasmania's forest industry: trends in forest industry employment and turnover, 2006 to 2010" by Dr Jacki Schirmer from the CRC for Forestry, found:

- one-third of forest workers lost their jobs in the last two years;
- job losses in the native forest sector were 4 times those in the plantation sector; and
- forest industry employment declined to less than 2% of the overall workforce.

Dr Phill Pullinger, Director of Environment Tasmania said "This report shows that past policies and practices are failing timber workers and communities across Tasmania."

"The data shows a permanent transition of jobs out of the native forest sector. The industry must restructure to be largely based on plantations if it is to have a secure future" he added.

Lindsay Hesketh of the Australian Conservation Foundation, said "The implementation of the Statement of Forest Principles provides the best opportunity for reforming industry so that it can provide secure jobs in a sustainable timber industry."

"The implementation will need the kind of important data provided by the CRC report – including where the job and community impacts are and which communities need help."

Paul Oosting, Wilderness Society added that "Aspirations by some in the timber industry to continue native forest logging would only continue the unhealthy conflict over logging. They are not in keeping with the Statement of Principles and are not in keeping with the reality of the changes in the market-place."

In addition, environment groups today repeated that forest contracts should be negotiated as part of the implementation process.

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