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Community Forums Discuss Forests Process

Environment groups have commenced a series of community forest consultative forums across the state. The forums are being held so that the public and environments groups can discuss the *'Tasmanian Forests Statement of Principles'* and the process now needed for protecting Tasmania's native forests, reforming the timber industry, and restoring water catchments and natural landscape values.

Last week forums were held in Launceston, Burnie and Deloraine, with speakers including; Lucy Landon-Lane from Pulp the Mill, Scott Jordan (Tarkine National Coalition), Phill Pullinger (Environment Tasmania), Paul Oosting (The Wilderness Society), Lindsay Hesketh (Australian Conservation Foundation), and Kim Booth (Tasmanian Greens).

"The forums have shown strong support for protecting Tasmania's native forests and for significant reforms to how the timber industry operates in Tasmania," said Dr Pullinger.

"However, we also saw deep fears, mistrust and anxiety" he continued. "Addressing these concerns and realising a solution will now require a good flow of information and a genuine and broad process of public participation," he said.

Issues raised so far have included;

- The need to protect Tasmania's native forests
- Concerns about the management and impacts of plantations.
- Calls to audit and reform plantation policy and management as part of the process, including reforms to: protect and restore water catchments; improve governance and regulation of plantations; and institute a restoration program.
- Strong opposition to Gunns' current proposed pulp mill in the Tamar Valley – exemplified by the unanimous passing of a motion from the floor at the Launceston meeting
- Concern that, this time, any public funding for the protection of native forests and structural reform of the timber industry is wisely spent and not wasted on subsidies or propping up business as usual
- The critical need of having well instituted public participation, consultation and engagement including regular two way flow of information with communities at every stage in the process.

Upcoming forums will be attended by local and State based speakers and include;

- Hobart: Tuesday 2 November, 5.30 – 7pm, Stanley Burbury Theatre, UTAS Churchill Ave
- Tasman Peninsula: Tuesday 9 November, 6.00 - 7.30pm. Eaglehawk Neck Community Hall, Arthur Highway
- St Helens: Friday 12 November, 5.30 – 7pm. Tidal Waters, 1 Quail St

Environment Tasmania is the peak body for Tasmanian environment & conservation groups – and represents over 20 Tasmanian environment groups with collective representation of over 5,000 Tasmanians.

For More Information or Comment:

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