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Environment groups welcome Gunns' frank assessment on native forests

The Wilderness Society, the Australian Conservation Foundation and Environment Tasmania welcomed the long awaited announcement by the Chief Executive of Gunns to move out of native forest logging and work with the community and conservation groups to "find joint solutions to age-old conflicts and move beyond [to] a real, sustainable forest industry". These comments forecast a change in direction to the long running conflict over forestry in Tasmania.

The Wilderness Society spokesperson Paul Oosting said "Community and environment groups working for decades for the protection of Tasmania's irreplaceable native forests see Gunns announcement as a very welcome breakthrough. We look forward to protecting Tasmania's forests and supporting new lasting jobs by continuing to work with the timber industry to pave a way forward."

Environment Tasmania, The Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation are engaged in talks with forestry industry representatives on options for the protection of native forests, the creation of a sustainable timber industry and the delivery of an end to the decades-long forest conflict. If groups can reach an agreement over principles, then they would seek government support for a broad process to involve stakeholders and the broader community in the development and delivery of a solution.

Environment Tasmania Director Dr Phill Pullinger also welcomed Gunns' shift. "We now have the best opportunity in decades to resolve the forest conflict in Tasmania. It is vitally important for Tasmania's future that we protect our native forests, create a timber industry that Tasmanians can be proud of, and heal the deep divisions in our community. We have to find a solution to the conflict over forestry that is durable, lasting and involves the whole Tasmanian community," he said.

"If Gunns moves out of native forest logging and concentrates on processing its plantations, it will protect jobs in the timber industry," said Lindsay Hesketh, National Forest Campaigner for the Australian Conservation Foundation.

"It's time to look at forests in Tasmania in a new way because the old way – a battle between jobs and forests – has protected neither. It ruptured the community, failed to protect jobs and destroyed Tasmanian's natural heritage.

"We encourage all players to continue dialogue to find common ground on these important issues," Mr Hesketh said.

For Comment,

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