

THE TASMANIAN PULP MILL—BELL BAY INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, TAMAR VALLEY

Conservation of Biological Diversity

Extract from SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS FOR TASMANIAN FORESTS 2001-2006¹

There has been **no significant change** (nil per cent) in the total mapped area of forest (native plus plantation) in Tasmania since 1996. Expansion in area of the plantation estate has essentially been the same as the decrease in area of native forest vegetation. While some plantation has been planted on previously cleared land this has been balanced by some native forest being cleared for a non-forest use, such as agriculture or essential infrastructure.

The mapped extent of native forest communities has decreased by 91,000 hectares, or 2.8 per cent since 1996, and by 53,000 hectares or 1.7 per cent since 2001. Most of the loss was in the wet eucalypt group of communities, which decreased by 52,000 hectares, or 5.9 per cent since 1996 and by 41,500 hectares or 3.1 per cent since 2001.

Plantation areas have expanded by 95,000 hectares, a 61.7 per cent increase since 1996, and by 41,500 hectares, a 21.2 per cent increase since 2001. Some of the new areas are on previously cleared agricultural land, and some on land newly cleared of native forest.

Forest tenure changes, particularly the creation of additional CAR reserves from State forest under the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement (TCFA) in 2005, have caused the total area of mature forest in conservation reserves to increase at the expense of State forest.

Implementation of the comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reservation framework agreed under the RFA has resulted in an extended system of public and private terrestrial CAR reserves. **Within this framework, 1,465,000 hectares of forested land, or 47.0 per cent, of Tasmania's native forests, are now protected**, compared with the 1996 reserved extent of 977,900 hectares or 30.5 per cent. This is an increase in reservation of 487,100 hectares, or 48.8 per cent since 1996, and of 194,000 hectares, or 15.3 per cent, since 2001.

In addition to the reservation of 1,417,000 hectares of native forest on public land, 48,000 hectares of forest on private land have been protected. Of the 50 native forest communities, 35 have at least 15 per cent of their estimated pre-1750 extent protected in reserves.

Within the reserve system 973,000 hectares of old growth forest, or **79.2 per cent of Tasmania's old growth forests, are now protected**, including 9,000 hectares on private land. This is an increase of 291,000 hectares since 1996 and 122,000 hectares since 2001. Of the 42 old growth forest communities, 32 have at least 60 per cent reservation.

The Forest Conservation Fund involves a tender process being carried out during 2007 to achieve voluntary reservation of old-growth forest on private land. These additions to the reserve system will bring the total old growth extent in reserves to the TCFA target of one million hectares.

About 1.4 per cent of the mapped area of old growth forest in 1996 has subsequently been harvested.

¹ Sustainability Indicators For Tasmanian Forests 2001-2006
http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/policy/rfa/documents/2007%20INDICATORS%20REPORT_FINAL%2024%20May%202007.pdf