

Overview of the Public Land Reserve Outcome

The Howard Government made a significant commitment to old-growth forest protection and the future growth of the timber industry through its policy 'A Sustainable Future for Tasmania'.

The Australian and Tasmanian governments have agreed to protect a new reserve area totalling about 148,400 hectares of public land, including 135,450 hectares of forest, of which 120,490 hectares is old growth. The significant features of the new reserves are:

- Increased protection of cool temperate rainforest in Australia, located in the Tarkine. The Tarkine area is identified by ecologists and conservationists as significant on a global scale. A new, formal reserve of 30,946 hectares will consolidate the Savage River and Donaldson wilderness areas. With a total of 73,512 hectares of rainforest to be added to reserves in this area, nearly all the rainforest in the Tarkine will now be protected.
- Protection of additional giant trees and old-growth forest in the Styx Valley. The increased protection in the Styx, now extending to 53 per cent of the valley, includes three new formal reserves totalling 4,660 hectares: a new Tall Trees Reserve around some of the tallest and largest trees in Australia, an enlarged Big Tree Reserve, and a substantial area of old-growth forest on the adjoining northern slopes of the Styx Valley. These additions increase the protection of old-growth tall wet eucalypt forest including *Eucalyptus obliqua* (stringybark) and *E. regnans* (swamp gum or mountain ash). These reserves will protect some of the tallest flowering plants in the world and enable visitors to access these natural wonders.
- Greater protection of old-growth forest in eastern Tasmania, particularly focusing on those communities where the national forest reserve targets were not reached under the original Regional Forest Agreement, consistent with the flexibility provisions of the reserve criteria. New formal reserves will be established in Wielangta forest, the Eastern Tiers, Blue Tier and in the north-eastern highlands, with extensions to the existing Mt Victoria and Mt Maurice reserves.

Overview of the Public Land Reserve Outcome (cont.)

Reservation levels of selected old-growth forest types

Old-Growth Forest	Reservation target (% of 1996 extent)	Existing reservation (%)	Existing reservation (ha)	New reservation (ha)	New reservation (%)	National forest reserve criteria numerical target
<i>E. amygdalina</i> forest on dolerite	60	50	15,190	18,960	62	Achieved
<i>E. amygdalina</i> forest on sandstone	60	33	2,190	4,680	71	Achieved
Dry <i>E. delegatensis</i> forest	60	60	48,620	54,100	68	Achieved
Tall <i>E. delegatensis</i> forest	60	56	58,920	63,500	61	Achieved
Dry <i>E. obliqua</i> forest	60	57	26,870	31,650	67	Achieved
Tall <i>E. obliqua</i> forest	60	55	46,170	52,840	63	Achieved
<i>E. pulchella/globulus/viminalis</i> forest	60	47	29,920	32,910	52	Reservation increased
<i>E. regnans</i> forest	60	49	6,510	7,480	56	Reservation increased

The table above shows the significant increases in reservation for a number of old-growth forest types, with many now meeting the numerical forest reserve criteria targets. The reservation of other old-growth forest types has increased substantially and the reserve criteria are considered met, taking social and economic factors into account.

Governments have also agreed to a new program to increase the protection of forest on private land. The program to secure private forest reserves has always been an important aspect of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA), in recognition that there are some forest types that, because of their distribution, cannot be adequately protected on public land. Please refer to Fact Sheet No. 8 *Protecting Forests on Private Land* for more information.

The RFA added 440,000 hectares of public land to reserves, creating a reserve system of over 2.7 million hectares of reserves. The RFA has also protected over 30,000 hectares of forest on private land to date, including 5,000 hectares of old growth.

With the extra public land areas protected as part of this new Agreement, Tasmania will have nearly 2.9 million hectares, or 42 per cent of the State's land area, in reserves. The reserve system previously protected over 40 per cent of Tasmania's native forests, 68 per cent of the State's old-growth forest and 95 per cent of high-quality wilderness. The new reserves will increase this protection to 45 per cent of Tasmania's native forests, 78 per cent of the 1996 old-growth forest area and 97 per cent of the 1996 high-quality wilderness areas.

The Australian Government's policy goal was to protect old-growth forest values through reservation of 125,700 hectares of forest on public land. The new Agreement protects a further 135,450 hectares of public forest, including:

- 81,980 hectares of rainforest across the State against a target of 76,100 hectares;
- 26,990 hectares of eucalypt forest in north-eastern, eastern and central Tasmania (containing 22,800 hectares of old-growth eucalypt against a target of 29,600 hectares);

- 6,460 hectares of eucalypt forest along the eastern boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area, including the Styx and the upper Florentine valleys (containing 4,730 hectares of old-growth eucalypt against a target of 18,700 hectares), as well as significant areas of rainforest included in the rainforest outcome. Further reservation along the boundary was carefully considered but not progressed due to the significant economic and social impacts of removing this high productivity forest from timber production;
- 18,090 hectares of eucalypt forest in northern and western Tasmania (containing an additional 17,980 hectares of old-growth eucalypt);
- 1,930 hectares of sub-alpine eucalypt forest against a target of 1,300 hectares.

One million hectares of old growth will be protected in reserves through the extra old growth added to public land reserves and the protection of at least 25,000 hectares of old growth expected to be secured through the new private forest reserve program.