

Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement

Second Stage Communications Strategy

BACKGROUND

In May 2005, the Australian and Tasmanian governments agreed on a comprehensive integrated communications strategy to raise awareness of the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.

The key elements of the strategy – the development of a comprehensive information pack, a nationally distributed information booklet, full-page advertisements in the national and Tasmanian press and a television advertising campaign – were implemented in the two months following the signing of the agreement.

A series of media announcements concerning various aspects of the agreement involving state and federal ministers was organised to support the paid media campaign.

The communications strategy dealt primarily with raising awareness and acceptance of the agreement's two main objectives – to further protect iconic wilderness in Tasmania and to restructure the Tasmanian forest industry to maximise employment and security.

From the outset, it was understood by both governments that the initial communications campaign would need to be reinforced at a later date and funds were set aside for this purpose.

The initial campaign has been successful. The level of environmental activism within Tasmania and nationally diminished significantly during the campaign period and has remained relatively low.

Focus group work by Clemenger Tasmania suggests that forestry has declined as a major community issue within Tasmania and that there is a relatively high recall of the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.

Research commissioned by the Forests and Forest Industry Council has found little evidence that Tasmanian forestry practices are a major concern in the chief population centres of Melbourne and Sydney.

However, full implementation of the communications strategy was interrupted by the state election in Tasmania. The international component has not yet been implemented and neither have aspects of a follow-up "below the line" national campaign.

It is now appropriate to review the initial strategy and to make amendments taking into account current community sentiment and developments in the international market.

The initial campaign strategy identified a need to protect Tasmania's existing and emerging international markets – a need that has become more pressing in the intervening months.

There is also evidence that environmental groups are beginning to re-enter the debate now that the initial wave of Community Forest Agreement advertising has passed.

International Markets

Issues:

The current downturn in international woodchip orders has been blamed in part on a campaign by conservationists to encourage Asian customers to boycott Tasmanian woodchips on environmental grounds.

There is evidence to support this view. After being heavily lobbied by conservationists, Mitsubishi recently announced that it would no longer buy woodchips sourced from Tasmanian old growth forests.

An effective communications strategy to protect Tasmania's international markets must eliminate environmental concerns as a cause for customers to choose other suppliers.

Industry analysts suggest international customers base their purchasing decisions on a number of factors primarily:

1. Price
2. Quality
3. Reliability of Supply

These factors are outside the scope of a government-funded communications strategy.

However, a fourth factor comes into play when buyers have two competing suppliers offering a similar product at similar prices with the same supply guarantees.

The conservation movement has adopted a tactic of harassing purchasers of Tasmanian woodchips with emails. In recent years, these email campaigns have widened to include trading partners of Tasmanian customers (Xerox, Canon etc) and financial houses.

These email campaigns are an annoyance and an undesirable distraction they would prefer to do without. These campaigns can therefore tip the balance in favour of Tasmanian competitors who do not attract the same level of criticism.

Customers have advised they simply “want the problem to go away”.

The objective therefore of any international communications strategy should be to reassure existing and emerging markets that Tasmania’s forest practices are sustainable and to relieve these markets of the obligation to deal with unwanted environmental campaigns.

To be effective, it also needs longevity. Even a short-sharp mass media advertising campaign in major markets would be prohibitively effective and in any case the benefits would be short lived.

Providing materials such as information sheets / DVDs / brochures to enable customers to respond to environmental campaigns is of limited value because it does not remove the onus of responding from the customer.

Key Messages:

Tasmania values its customers.

Tasmania’s forests are sustainably managed and independently certified to international standards.

Tasmania has a plan for continued environmental and service improvements.

Tasmania values its ancient forests, with the highest ratio of old growth protection in the world.

Initiative One: Handling Issues on Behalf of Valued Clients

The key plank of this communications strategy moves the burden of handling questions about Tasmanian forest practices away from Tasmania’s international customers to the Australian and Tasmanian governments.

This would be achieved by enlisting the Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) office in Tokyo and the Beijing Forestry Academy to handle complaints, concerns and questions on behalf of the Australian and Tasmanian governments.

(NB: Australia has been a member of the PEFC since 2002 and the Australian Forestry Standard was accredited by PEFC in 2004.)

Valued existing or potential customers would be offered a special service. When contacted by conservation groups, by letter or email, they would simply advise the group that its inquiry would be referred to the PEFC or the Beijing Forestry Academy.

Using materials and a web-based information system provided by the Australian and Tasmanian governments, the PEFC would then send a pre-prepared letter and an appropriate electronic (or hard copy) information pack to the conservation group.

The customer would then be advised the matter had been dealt with and the details would be forwarded to a central point in Tasmania, where a data-base of all conservation-based contacts with customers could be assembled to identify emerging campaign trends and threats.

To function effectively, the PEFC office and the Beijing Forestry Academy will need a range of materials. A comprehensive web-based information page (similar to the Windows Help Page) detailing every aspect of Tasmanian forests and forest products forms the backbone of these resources. Properly constructed, this web-based facility should be capable of providing answers to every conceivable question about Tasmania's forests, including the regulatory framework, biodiversity, timber products, wildlife, harvesting methods, conservation reserves, ongoing research etc.

It should be capable of dealing with all levels of inquiry – from basic information that might be required by a primary school student through to a scientific specialist in forest research. While it needs to be user friendly, it must also inspire confidence through the sheer weight of information available.

The web facility (designed to be easily downloaded to desktop computers) would be included on a DVD for distribution to interested stakeholders including customers, embassy staff and trade officials.

The web facility could be developed by the Tasmanian Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources (DIER) and the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), with ongoing maintenance of the facility provided by DIER's Policy Unit.

This service provided through the PEFC offices should also be available to a valued customer's trading partners and financiers.

Most of the information required for the web page is already available through Forestry Tasmania, Private Forests Tasmania/DIER, the Forest Practices Authority etc. However, it will need to be reformatted to meet the needs of an international audience, and it may need to be translated into Mandarin and Japanese.

The arrangement with PEFC and the Beijing Forestry Academy should be reviewed after two years.

Initiative Two: Valued Customers Program

This initiative is designed to strengthen relationships between the state of Tasmania and the state's forest products customers and is modelled on the successful Visiting Journalists Program employed by Tourism Tasmania, and to a lesser extent, Brand Tasmania.

This initiative offers the opportunity for senior executives of major customers to visit Tasmania as guests of the Australian and Tasmanian governments to see for themselves the management of the state's forests.

The intent is two-fold – to have uninterrupted access to senior executives to reinforce the message that Tasmania is a world leader in forest management and secondly to demonstrate through hospitality the value Tasmania places on their custom.

Participants in the Valued Customer Program would have access to the Premier, the Federal Minister for Fisheries and Forestry, the State Minister for Economic Development and the Chief Executive of Forestry Tasmania.

Participants would be presented with a hand-crafted Tasmanian wood product acknowledging Valued Customer status.

A visit is more likely to have a lasting impact on influential executives than a DVD or an information pack that may be viewed once and then left to gather dust.

Initiative Three: Diplomatic Program

The initial communications strategy sought to enlist the support of Australian diplomatic missions and Austrade to promote Tasmania's sustainable forest practices in key markets. It was proposed that Australian diplomatic officials be provided with an information pack including a DVD outlining Tasmania's environmental credentials for distribution to buyers and potential buyers of Tasmanian forest products. This aspect of the communications strategy was not implemented.

This proposal has now been expanded. Governments in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, China and Japan, amongst others, are being heavily lobbied to amend government procurement policies to exclude products made from Tasmanian woodchips.

These lobbying efforts can only be dealt with at a government-to-government level. Australian diplomatic staff and trade officials will be required to implement country-specific strategies to dissuade foreign governments from excluding Australian products.

Relevant embassies should maintain a watching brief on this issue, and arrange, as appropriate, briefings with relevant government officials.

Embassy officials will be assisted in this task through the production of an appropriate information kit, through the Forest Industry Service Centre and by being able to access

Australian and Tasmanian government representatives to address functions organised by the embassy for buyers, legislators and opinion makers.

The information packs including a high quality DVD will still be produced, but instead of relying on embassy staff for distribution, it is proposed that embassies nominated by the Australian and Tasmanian governments organise functions for buyers and opinion makers.

Initiative Four: Improving Customer Service

The international component will require face-to-face visits by a Tasmanian representative to key customers in existing and emerging markets.

The representative would need to be chosen by the Tasmanian Government in consultation with the Australian Government.

The purpose of these meetings is to provide briefings on the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement and most importantly to offer Valued Customer status to clients selected in consultation with Tasmanian forest product suppliers.

Valued Customers would be entitled to services provided through the PEFC offices in Beijing and Tokyo and to visit Tasmania under the Valued Customer Program.

Initiative Five: Visiting Journalists Program

While an effective mass media campaign in major markets is beyond the reach of the TCFA communications program, there is potential to reach major opinion makers through the targeted use of national and international trade publications.

Selected journalists from trade publications specialising in forestry and forest products should be invited to visit Tasmania to provide a first hand account of the State's environmental performance, its adherence to the Australian Forestry Standard and the PEFC.

Research would need to be commissioned to determine those publications with the most extensive reach into the opinion makers, legislators and the forest and forest product corporate sector.

Under the program, an-all-expenses paid trip plus access to leading forestry figures ,would be offered to those selected journalists.

Initiative Six: Australia's Procurement Policy

Recent reports suggest Australia imports forest products worth \$500 million to \$600 million from countries where forests are illegally or unsustainably harvested.

To demonstrate its commitment to sustainable forest practices, the Australian Government with the support of the states could implement a procurement policy, which specifically prohibits the use by government agencies of forest products that do not meet the Australian Forestry Standard or the accompanying Chain of Custody standard.

The Australian Forestry Standard is currently not well understood by the Australian community. The introduction of a procurement policy requiring compliance with this standard would not only increase awareness through the resulting media coverage, but would also win strong support from the Australian forest communities, including unions.

Such a policy would send a clear signal to international markets that Australian forest products are independently certified.

Materials Required:

1. Web-based Facility
 - a. Design similar to the Windows Help Page
 - b. Content to include:
 - i. Overview
 - ii. A how-to-use guide
 - iii. Tasmania's reserve system
 - iv. Regulatory environment
 - v. The Australian Forestry Standard
 - vi. Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification
 - vii. Tasmania's forest products
 - viii. Harvesting methods
 - ix. Regional Forest Agreement
 - x. Scientific papers
 - xi. Wildlife
 - xii. Timber species
 - xiii. Forest types
 - xiv. National parks
 - xv. Tourist attractions
 - xvi. Forest policies
 - xvii. Old growth logging
 - xviii. Resource mix
 - xix. Plantations
 - xx. Regrowth
 - xxi. Contacts
2. High quality DVD incorporating the web page
 - a. Key Messages
 - i. Tasmania values its customers.

- ii. Tasmania's forests are sustainably managed and independently certified.
 - iii. Tasmania has a plan for continued environmental and service improvements.
 - iv. Tasmania values its ancient forests, with the highest ratio of old growth protection in the world.
 - b. Content:
 - i. Information about Tasmania
 - ii. National Parks and reserves
 - iii. High quality timber products
 - iv. Australian Forestry Standard
 - v. Chain of Custody Certificate
 - vi. Endorsement (from clients and scientists)
 - vii. CRC for Sustainable Forestry
 - viii. Plantations
 - ix. Regrowth logging coupes
 - x. Wildlife protection
 - xi. The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement
 - c. Target Audience:
 - i. International clients
 - d. Style
 - i. Proud
 - ii. Reassuring but not defensive
 - e. Length
 - i. A minimum of 10 minutes and a maximum of 15 minutes.
 - f. Longevity
 - i. The DVD should have a lifespan of two years and therefore information that is likely to change should be excluded.
 - g. Quantity
 - i. 200
3. Information Booklet
- a. A written version of the material in the DVD.
 - b. Glossy
 - c. Quantity – 1000.
4. Information Kit for Valued Clients
- a. A guide to using the Tasmanian Forest Service Centre
 - b. An invitation to visit from the Prime Minister and the Premier
 - c. Standard email response to critics of Tasmanian forest practices
 - d. Contacts for further information.
 - e. The *Seeing is Believing* Forestry Tasmania publication
 - f. The DVD
 - g. The web page
 - h. Australian Forestry Standard

International Action Plan:

Action	Timeline	Indicative Costings	Procurement/Appointment Process	
Negotiate Agreement with PEFC and Beijing Forestry Academy	June 2006	Tokyo PEFC - \$50,000pa Beijing Forestry Academy - \$50,000pa (Total: \$200,000)	By Agreement with PEFC and Beijing Forestry Academy	
Develop Web facility/ IT Platform	June /July 2006 for use overseas on an ongoing basis	\$30,000	Obtain quotes from three reputable service providers	
Prepare content for web facility	June/July /August	Contracted writer required \$50,000	Use existing material from Forestry Tasmania/Forest Practices Authority/CRC for Sustainable Forestry. DAFF/DIER to appoint consultant.	
Develop IT electronic Information pack	August/September	\$15,000	Tender	
Trial IT platform	August/September	In House	DIER/DAFF	
Produce DVD	August/September	\$60,000	Tender for DVD production/Information booklet and electronic information pack.	
Information Booklet	September	\$50,000	As above	
Appoint representative to visit Valuea Clients/Consult	June/July	\$5,000 travel contribution In House	In House	

industry on valued client list				
Develop Information Kit for valued clients	October	In House	In House	
Rep to visit Valued Clients	October/November	\$80,000		
Service Centre fully operational	October			
Briefings for DFAT and Austrade	October	\$20,000		
Develop and implement schedule for Embassy briefings	November – Ongoing as required	\$100,000		
Visiting Journalists program	2007 ongoing	\$100,000 per annum (\$200,000 over two years)	Tasmanian Forest Service Centre to manage in conjunction with Brand Tasmania.	
Total Indicative Costing		\$810,000		

Note: These are indicative costings only and subject to competitive tendering.

National Campaign

Background:

The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement was signed on May 13 2005. Details of the agreement were included in an eight-page booklet (*The Way Forward*) and distributed throughout Australia through an insert in the *Weekend Australian*.

A number of full-page advertisements outlining the agreement were published in the major Fairfax and News Limited newspapers.

In Tasmania, the press campaign was supported by a substantial television advertising campaign.

The promotion of the agreement effectively dampened the strength of the forest/conservation debate for the remainder of 2005.

Since the cessation of the campaign, community awareness of the TCFA has predictably declined, providing an information vacuum and an opportunity for environmental groups to relaunch their anti-forestry campaigns.

The first anniversary of the agreement this month provides a legitimate opportunity for the Australian and Tasmanian governments to remind the community of the agreement and to report progress on those elements.

In fact, it could be argued, that given the substantial funding allocated to the restructuring of the Tasmanian forest industry (\$250 million), there is an obligation on the Australian and Tasmanian governments to provide a progress report.

Issues and Opportunities

The first anniversary of the agreement provides the Australian and Tasmanian governments an opportunity to report progress and to indicate future implementation of the agreement.

However, the progress report needs to take into account the sensitivities surrounding recent developments in the international market.

Demand for Tasmanian woodchips is currently in a cyclical low, resulting in some forest contractors losing work. These pressures have generated significant media coverage within Tasmania during May 2006, with some media outlets and green groups suggesting the agreement has failed to protect jobs.

The development and implementation of an international communications plan may provide reassurance to Tasmanian contractors that both governments are taking action to protect overseas markets.

Key Messages

Tasmania's forest industry is now working to a plan for continued environmental improvement.

Tasmania's forests are sustainably managed and independently certified.

The use of 1080 poison on public land has been banned.

More than one million hectares of Tasmania's old growth forests is now protected.

Funding is helping the Tasmanian forest industry move into a new era of improved productivity and certainty.

New reserves protecting the giant trees of the Styx Valley and the deep red myrtle in the Tarkine are providing new tourism opportunities.

In 12 months we've come a long way, but we have a plan to continue to protect our heritage and our jobs.

Message Delivery:

1. The Way Forward – a Year On.

An eight-page-progress report delivered nationally as an insert in the *Weekend Australian* and within Tasmania through the *Mercury*, the *Examiner* and the *Advocate*.

2. The Way Forward – Advertisements in targeted lifestyle magazines.

These advertisements would focus heavily on the beauty and durability of Tasmania's high end timber products – furniture, flooring, veneers, etc – and how they are used in homes and offices.

The key message is that consumers can buy Tasmania's timber products with confidence – knowing they are produced from sustainably managed forests in accordance with the Australian Forestry Standard.

The campaign would use the media buy to leverage editorial coverage of Tasmania's timber industry, Tasmania's wilderness reserves, forestry research, the Australian Forestry Standard and the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.

Selected journalists from targeted magazines would be invited to visit Tasmania under Brand Tasmania's Visiting Journalist Program.

3. The Way Forward - Television Advertising.

A Tasmanian television advertising campaign is required to support the eight-page progress report distributed through national and state newspapers.

The television campaign would therefore carry the same key messages as the progress report, drawing on the footage already available for use in the proposed DVD.

The television campaign should start early in the financial year with a second tranche to be aired early in the 2007 calendar year.

4. Servicing Australian buyers.

Tasmania also needs to protect its Australian domestic market for specialty timbers, furniture grade timbers, flooring, and construction timber products.

Australian buyers of these products should have access to the services provided to valued international customers through DIER and DAFF.

Major Australian buyers of Tasmanian timbers will be identified and provided with an information kit.

The information kit provided to overseas buyers and embassies can be modified at relatively low cost to meet the needs of the domestic market.

Australian buyers too would be able to refer correspondence from anti-forestry groups to a central contact point located in DIER for response, using the same web-facility as that provided to the PEFC and Beijing Forestry Academy.

4. Maintaining bi-partisan support

The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement has won bi-partisan support at a national and state level.

It is recommended that all state and federal MPs receive an information kit and are offered a progress report on the forest agreement.

The Australian and Tasmanian governments would also have the capacity to refer inquiries about Tasmania's forest practices to the central contact point in DIER.

5. Maintaining timber industry support

There will be a requirement to keep peak forestry organizations, timber companies and timber workers fully informed of the next phase of the TCFA communications strategy.

Once agreement has been reached on the communications plan, the following organizations should be briefed:

1. Forest Industries Association of Tasmania,
2. Forests and Forest Industry Council,
3. The National Association of Forest Industries,
4. Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union,
5. Tasmanian branch of Timber Communities Australia.

A copy of the progress report should also be included in the industry magazine *True Blue*.

6. Media Announcement

The Australian and Tasmanian governments should make a joint announcement on progress achieved in the first 12 months of the agreement.

The announcement should focus on initiatives implemented during the past 12 months and plans for the next 12 months.

It should also mention major elements of the communications plan in the context of how the plan will assist timber contractors by providing support to major Tasmanian timber customers.

The announcement should be made at the earliest opportunity with follow-up announcements to be made when the plan is implemented.

Domestic Action Plan

Action	Timeline	Indicative Costs	Procurement Appointment Process
Eight page progress report	Mid July	\$160,000	Tender for creative concept, television/magazine campaign, progress report
Television campaign	Early to mid July And continuing	\$410,000	
Information Kits (Quantity 600)	Early July	\$10,000	
Magazine campaign	August ongoing	\$100,000	
Visiting Journalist program	August ongoing	\$50,000	DAFF/DIER
Total (National)		\$730,000	
Total (International)		\$815,000	
Campaign total:		\$1.54 million	

(NB: The total funds available for the communications strategy is \$1.54m.)