

Forestry Tasmania media release

The battered brief case is gone

Forestry Tasmania threw open its doors today to signal a new era of community engagement.

Representatives from major media organisations attended the first open day at FT's headquarters in Hobart since it was opened a decade ago.

Managing Director Bob Gordon said he hoped the open day would be the first in a number in the months and years ahead.

"We have used the past five months to have a good hard look at FT, with the aim of determining whether it is meeting community expectations, whether it has the right structure to meet future challenges and its role in the forest industry.

"As part of this review, we spoke to more than 100 organisations and individuals to identify our strengths and our weaknesses.

"We found that overall, FT has an extremely good reputation with broad respect for its professionalism, its efficiency and its contribution to Tasmania's regional economy.

However, there were also weaknesses. Stakeholders identified a number of areas where FT could do better and they told us to:

- * Stop being so busy and start re-engaging with the community
- * To be more consultative
- * Stop being defensive and spend more time talking to people
- * And be more open and transparent.

"It was suggested that we were carrying around a locked battered brief case, and it was time to let everyone see what was inside.

"So today is a step towards unlocking the brief case and consigning it to history," Mr Gordon said.

To this end FT had adopted a range of measures including:

- * A new approach to Freedom of Information requests. In future, all responses to FoI will be released to the media.
- * A series of open days at FT headquarters to encourage greater understanding of its work and employees.
- * Meetings with stakeholders in regional areas.
- * Pursuing meaningful dialogue with critics, including environmental groups.
- * A policy to respond where possible to all media inquiries within an hour.
- * And the guidelines established by the Ombudsman in the Gunns wood supply agreement case, will be used to respond to requests for the release of other supply agreements, subject to the approval of our customers.

Mr Gordon said that an appraisal of FT's organisational structure would also form part of the current review.

"It has been widely reported that FT is reviewing the size of its workforce, a process that has been prompted by adverse market conditions.

"With more and more areas of native forests reserved from harvesting, it is inevitable that the industry has had to adjust to changing circumstances.

"Organisations like FT need to keep pace, and occasionally they need to restructure to suit emerging market trends.

"FT will always act in a commercial manner as required by law, but we will do it within the constraints of managing the forests for the benefit of all.

"That will require a change in how our success is measured. When our foresters think in 90-year timeframes, success cannot be measured by a profit result over twelve months.

"Profits will fluctuate according to the market, but sustainable forest management must remain constant."

ENDS 1st June 2007