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Senator for Tasmania

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M E D I A R E L E A S E

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Schedulers report released

Reports by Independent Expert Schedulers confirm that at least 34 coupes within 430,000 hectares of Tasmanian forest nominated for further assessment will be needed to meet contractual wood supply requirements to February next year.

The Federal Government has delayed the release of the independent reports because they contradict the advice provided by Jonathan West, the head of the Tasmanian forests assessment panel, Coalition Forestry spokesman Richard Colbeck said.

“The Senate recently ordered the Government to release reports of the independent schedulers. The Government responded saying the reports had not been completed and would be released when they were,” Senator Colbeck said.

“The first of these reports (attached) had been completed and it was called for by name in the Senate motion.

“The Government still has not released this report, so I am doing so today in a bid to restore balance to current debates about wood supply contracts.

“The report shows that at least 25 coupes would need to be accessed in the period from August to the end of December.

“Twice the Government sent the report back to the independent schedulers. During that period four coupes were harvested, so subsequent reports indicated 21 coupes were required to meet contracts, confirming the initial findings.

“The reality is that the Government did not want to contradict the advice they had taken from Jonathan West, the head of the assessment panel, who suggested no coupes would be required from the 430,000 hectares nominated for further assessment.

“Now the assessment process that was supposed to be completed by the end of December hasn’t even started, and its completion has been extended to the end of February. The independent schedulers report indicates a total of 34 coupes will be required for harvest in that period.

“The sad reality is that this sham process will leave the Tasmanian forest industry even less sustainable and under more pressure.

“Gunns Ltd’s exit from native forests provided an opportunity to reduce the intensity of harvest across the State, giving better environmental, forestry and economic outcomes but the Greens, Labor and the environmental groups could not accept that.

“The Greens, Labor and the environmental groups are instead intent on squeezing what is left of the industry into an ever smaller area which will, most likely, result in higher harvest intensity.

“Last week there were more protests in the forests, confirming again that Tasmania has been sold a pup with the sham of so-called “peace talks”.

“Environmental groups repeatedly show they are not interested in compromise, they just want everything their own way – regardless of the facts.

“The protests won’t stop and there will be no peace, the Greens have already told us they want it all when it comes to killing off the native forestry sector.

“This process has been a sham from the start and it is time it was stopped,” Senator Colbeck said.