

# Stakeholder Engagement Operational Approach

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**Sustainable  
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Tasmania**

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## Purpose and Scope

This Stakeholder Engagement Operational Approach sets out:

- Our basic approach
- What we are trying to achieve with our stakeholder engagement
- Who we are engaging with
- How we are engaging
- Improving our engagement

The Approach applies to all of the operations undertaken by Sustainable Timber Tasmania, staff, contractors or any other person who engages with stakeholders on behalf of Sustainable Timber Tasmania. While recognising the importance of ongoing positive engagement with Sustainable Timber Tasmania's Government shareholders, this Approach specifically focuses on our relations with stakeholders affected by, or interested in, Sustainable Timber Tasmania's operational activities.

## Our Approach

In engaging with all our stakeholders, Sustainable Timber Tasmania will:

- Regard stakeholders as any individual, group or organisation that is impacted or has an interest in our operations
- Strive to develop and maintain strong positive relationships with our stakeholders
- Be open and transparent –seeking to anticipate needs and provide information to meet those needs, rather than just responding to direct requests
- Seek to listen and ask rather than tell, and appropriately consider all input
- Understand and respect the communication needs of different stakeholders – tailoring our communications and engagement accordingly
- Be professional, timely, objective and respectful in all our communications and engagement including respecting stakeholders privacy
- Be committed to improving our engagement with stakeholders by regularly monitoring, reviewing and publicly reporting on our stakeholder engagement

## What are we trying to achieve?

Sustainable Timber Tasmania seeks to listen and engage with its stakeholders as an important and integral part of doing its job well. In particular, Sustainable Timber Tasmania aims to:

- Be aware of and respect the needs and expectations of our customers, neighbours, staff and the wider community
- Obtain valuable insights and input that will assist our planning and decision making
- Be aware of and can respond promptly to issues of concern before they become more significant problems
- Develop and maintain open, trusting relationships with our stakeholders
- Build understanding, trust and support for what Sustainable Timber Tasmania does



## What are the benefits for stakeholders?

Sustainable Timber Tasmania wants to achieve better outcomes by being aware of and taking into account the needs and expectations of its stakeholders when developing its plans and conducting operations in a way that minimises potential issues of concern.

Through better relationships and improved two way flow of information, stakeholders will:

- Be better informed of what is being planned
- Have better understanding of the operational and other considerations that are being taken into account in decision making
- Have early opportunities to work together to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, and
- Have reduced conflict and early resolution of issues

## Stakeholders – who are we trying to engage with?

Sustainable Timber Tasmania aims to engage with its stakeholders including but not limited to our staff, customers, contractors, neighbours and the wider community.

Stakeholders of Sustainable Timber Tasmania are any person, group or organisation that is directly affected by or interested in the operations of Sustainable Timber Tasmania.

### Affected Stakeholders

Affected stakeholders are:

- Those who live in, manage or own neighbouring property within close proximity of our operations
- Residents who live along roads that may be directly affected by our harvest or haulage operations
- Local councils
- Other persons, groups, or organisations who have identified themselves to Sustainable Timber Tasmania as potentially affected by our operations

Sustainable Timber Tasmania is a committed signatory to the Good Neighbour Charter, an agreement that describes how Tasmanian forest companies will communicate with their neighbours.

We have procedures in place to identify stakeholders that may be directly affected by our forestry operations, including harvesting, burning, roading, quarrying, and other silvicultural operations.

These procedures utilise the Tasmanian Government's central Land Information System Tasmania (LIST) to identify all neighbours and other stakeholders within defined distances of each of these operations.

We also have arrangements in place with key stakeholder organisations such as the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania and Wine Tasmania to keep each other informed of activities (such as planned burns) that could affect or are of potential interest to their members.

Local knowledge and experience is also critical in identifying stakeholders. All our operations are managed by regionally deployed staff who are encouraged to be aware of issues of local concern and interest.

In addition we also invite stakeholders to contact Sustainable Timber Tasmania's Engagement Team. In particular we encourage stakeholders to review our Three Year Wood



Production Plan and the interactive map viewer to identify potential operations that may be of interest to them.

## **Interested Stakeholders**

Interested stakeholders are:

- Persons, groups, or organisations that are interested in our operations but are not directly affected by them
- These may include but are not limited to groups such as
  - Industry organisations
  - Environmental non-government organisations
  - Community organisations
  - Scientific community
  - Government/Regulatory organisations

Other interested stakeholders are also invited to contact us at any time via email (stakeholder@sttas.com.au), or direct contact with staff.

## **How - what mechanisms do we use to engage with our stakeholders?**

### **Affected Stakeholders**

The majority of engagement with stakeholders that are likely to be directly affected by Sustainable Timber Tasmania's forestry operations occurs through Sustainable Timber Tasmania's regional offices and operational staff on issues such as planning, harvesting, roading, quarrying, planned burning, spraying, browsing control, and forest activity assessments.

The engagement activities for directly affected stakeholders in relation to forest operations are described below for each type of forest operation.

### **Planning**

#### ***Forest Management Plan***

Sustainable Timber Tasmania's Forest Management Plan is a key guiding document and aims to provide an overview of our Forest Management System. It provides stakeholders with a high level description of how Sustainable Timber Tasmania conducts its business and details Sustainable Timber Tasmania's approach to managing social, economic and environmental values while meeting log supply requirements from Permanent Timber Production Zone land.

The Forest Management Plan was developed taking into account significant stakeholder input that was received on the draft Plan. The Forest Management Plan was revised in January 2016 and is available from Sustainable Timber Tasmania's website.

The next major review of Sustainable Timber Tasmania's Forest Management Plan is scheduled for 2019 and stakeholder input will be sought via written submissions, emails, phone calls and face to face meetings. Comments received prior to this scheduled review of the plan are also welcome and will be taken into account in future reviews of the plan along with operational, legislative and policy constraints.



## **Three Year Plan**

Sustainable Timber Tasmania's Three Year Wood Production Plan is developed consistent with the overarching Forest Management Plan and describes Sustainable Timber Tasmania's intent to harvest particular coupes within the next three years and proposed road building to enable harvest and delivery of forest products to customers. Input is sought from local councils by Sustainable Timber Tasmania's Planning Coordinators through annual meetings and ongoing liaison pre and post meeting. These meetings normally occur in the first half of the calendar year.

The annual Three Year Plan is finalised in early July each year and published on Sustainable Timber Tasmania's website along with an interactive map viewer that continues to be refined to provide easily accessible information to directly affected stakeholders and interested stakeholders. This map viewer enables stakeholders to identify potential operations that may be of interest to them. The aims of this process are to:

- Inform stakeholders of the coupes in which it is intended there will be harvest operations in the next three years
- Identify whether stakeholders have any specific concerns in relation to particular coupes and whether they have an interest in being informed about any future operations on those coupes, and
- Identify issues that will need to be taken into account in detailed planning and decision making related to specific coupes

Stakeholders are encouraged to contact the Engagement Team either as early as possible after the annual publication of the Three Year Plan to register their interest in relation to any particular coupes, to advise of any issues of particular concern, or if they would like any further information. Stakeholders that identify themselves will be added to Sustainable Timber Tasmania's stakeholder engagement database for that coupe so that their input can be taken into account and to keep them informed as the site specific plans are prepared.

Public notices in daily and local Tasmanian newspapers are used to increase awareness of this process.

## **Forest Operations**

### **Harvesting**

Following production of the Three Year Wood Production Plans, Forest Practices Plans (FPPs) are the key operational documents developed that set out the requirements for management and monitoring of harvesting and establishment of any particular coupe, road line or quarry. Input from directly affected stakeholders is sought during the preparation of FPPs by the author of the FPP. Identification of these directly affected stakeholders is assisted by the consultation process described above on the annually published Three Year Plan and the capture of this information within Sustainable Timber Tasmania's stakeholder engagement database.

Contact with identified directly affected stakeholders may occur via phone, email/letter and/or face to face meetings dependent upon the circumstances. This consultation assists Sustainable Timber Tasmania in being aware of potential stakeholder issues and concerns and can therefore put in place measures to mitigate or eliminate these concerns wherever possible during planning and conduct of subsequent operations.

Where the issues of concern are more complex, or where requested by the author of the FPP, Regional Managers and/or the Manager, Engagement and Land Management may also directly engage with potentially affected stakeholders in an attempt to resolve outstanding issues.



Finalised FPPs and any variations to those plans are available upon request once the plan of variation has been certified. The FPP author is responsible for advising directly affected stakeholders of the availability of these plans.

As FPPs may be written some time in advance of the actual operation, a separate Notice of Intent (NOI) is issued by the FPP author at least 30 days prior to the likely commencement of operations to neighbouring landowners within 100m of the planned operation, other identified directly affected stakeholders and local councils. This final advice also acts as a check that there are no additional issues from affected stakeholders to take into account.

In some cases, the issues raised by stakeholders may be much wider than a particular coupe or operation and relate to a general practice or a large complex issue, for example swift parrot management. In these situations, Sustainable Timber Tasmania will seek to engage with relevant stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the issues and the relevant operating context and constraints.

Based on this input, Sustainable Timber Tasmania will seek to develop appropriate and credible processes to explore the issues; to identify and assess potential options and constraints; and to work towards identification and implementation of evidence based solutions.

This approach may involve meetings, phone calls and written communication with stakeholders. This engagement will be coordinated by the stakeholder engagement team of Sustainable Timber Tasmania.

### ***Roading and Quarrying***

Sustainable Timber Tasmania constructs and maintains a vast network of roads to access the Permanent Timber Production Zone land for harvesting and subsequent regeneration and forest management operations. Road and quarry construction requires a Forest Practices Plan (FPP), and therefore the processes for stakeholder engagement mirror those for harvesting outlined above.

In addition to FPPs for quarry construction, actual blasting operations within operating quarries or for road construction have additional notification requirements for affected stakeholders prior to blasting. These notifications normally occur via phone. Email/letter and face to face meetings may also occur. Sustainable Timber Tasmania's Roothing Coordinators are responsible for this notification.

In addition to road construction operations, Sustainable Timber Tasmania recognises that stakeholders have an interest in the availability and use of forest roads that are managed by Sustainable Timber Tasmania. Regional Forest Managers in liaison with the Roothing Coordinators will therefore seek to notify local councils, put signage in place on the affected road, and include information on the Sustainable Timber Tasmania website at least 30 days prior to planned closure of any significant link roads known to be used by non-forestry users.

However, it must be noted that some roads will need to be closed with little if any notice if safety of the road has been compromised, for example as a result of a bridge failure.

Information on road closures is updated regularly on Sustainable Timber Tasmania's website.

### ***Planned Burning***

Sustainable Timber Tasmania conducts planned burning operations to regenerate harvested forests and to improve the safety of the community by reducing fuel loads in production forests. Sustainable Timber Tasmania engages key affected stakeholder organisations and the general public prior to the seasonal commencement of these operations. The Engagement Team notifies the public by public notices in state papers as early as possible before the burning season commences in autumn. The key affected stakeholder



organisations are engaged via meetings with the Manager, Engagement and Land Management and the Manager, Fire Management. Details of Sustainable Timber Tasmania contact officers are provided if any further information is required.

Prior engagement with potentially affected neighbours and other identified stakeholders also occurs during planning of burns of individual coupes in advance of the burning season. This is done by the Fire Management Coordinator or their delegate by phone calls and face to face meetings to discuss the burning program and site specific plans. These site specific plans also detail the notification requirements for affected stakeholders by the Duty Officer or their delegate prior to ignition on the day of the burn.

During the planned burn season, the [What's Burning Now page](#) on the Tasmanian Fire Service website is used to provide updated information on planned burns each day. Information on likely impacts and progress of burns are made each day via Sustainable Timber Tasmania's Facebook page by the Engagement Team.

### ***Spraying***

Sustainable Timber Tasmania conducts spraying operations using chemicals only where this is essential to manage weeds and pests, to promote optimal growth in plantations and very occasionally in preparation for regeneration burning. Sustainable Timber Tasmania seeks to engage with potentially affected stakeholders during the planning of these spraying operations. The Engagement Team will make available the following information prior to the spraying season in October and May every year via the Sustainable Timber Tasmania website and public notices:

- The planned areas of herbicide application
- The area of plantations to be monitored for insect attack
- The area of plantations sprayed in the previous season (as an indication of likely extent of areas to be sprayed in the coming season as not all areas monitored are sprayed)

The aims of this process are to:

- Inform stakeholders of the likely areas to be sprayed
- Identify whether stakeholders have any specific concerns in relation to particular coupes and want to be informed about any future operations on those coupes, and
- Identify issues that will need to be taken into account in the detailed planning and decision making related to specific coupes.

Stakeholders are encouraged to contact the Engagement Team as early as possible after the annual publication of the planned spraying program either in writing or by phone to register their interest in relation to any particular coupes, to advise of any issues of particular concern, or if they would like any further information. Stakeholders that identify themselves will be added to Sustainable Timber Tasmania's stakeholder engagement database for that coupe so that their input can be taken into account and to keep them informed as the site specific plans are written with the aim of putting in place measures to mitigate or eliminate these concerns wherever possible in the site specific plan.

Wherever possible the Senior Forest Officer coordinating the operations will notify potentially affected stakeholders a day before any spraying operations are commenced.

### ***Browsing Control***

During both the regeneration of native forest and the establishment of plantations young forests are susceptible to the effects of browsing mammals. Sustainable Timber Tasmania conducts control operations to maintain the viability of these young forests until they pass through the susceptible phase.



Affected stakeholders (defined as occupiers of dwellings within 250m of any planned firearm use) are notified of our intention to use firearms during preparation of the site specific control plan by the Senior Forest Officer coordinating the operation. This contact with affected stakeholders usually occurs via phone or face to face meetings to seek permission prior to firearm use.

### **Forest Activity Assessments**

Forest activity assessments cover a variety of uses of Permanent Timber Production Zone land that are not covered by a Forest Practices Plan. Examples of this type of activity include recreational events and occupational right applications (for example leases for telecommunications, energy or water infrastructure, and licences for tourism operations). An assessment is conducted to assess the environmental values and potential impacts of the proposed activity.

The proponents of these activities are required to demonstrate to Sustainable Timber Tasmania that where appropriate they have sought to identify and engage with potentially affected stakeholders. The level of the engagement is dependent upon the nature and extent of the proposed activity as deemed by the Regional Forest Manager. The actual stakeholder engagement is primarily the responsibility of the external proponent, who is the person or organisation requesting permission to undertake the activity. If necessary, prescriptions may be added to any lease, licence or permit to minimise adverse impacts.

### **Agreements with stakeholder groups**

Sustainable Timber Tasmania has developed a number of formal agreements with stakeholder groups. The purpose of these agreements is to:

- Develop and consolidate relationships with the stakeholder group
- Understand the needs of the parties involved, and
- Have agreed guidelines on the mutual management of potential future issues

Agreements are in place for example with beekeepers, mountain bike clubs, and other service organisations. Sustainable Timber Tasmania is open to discussion with other stakeholder groups to put in place similar arrangements where there are mutual benefits in doing so.

### **Customers**

Sustainable Timber Tasmania recognises that, as a commercial business enterprise, our customers are critical to our success and we will strive to provide the service that reflects the importance of the status. In recognition of this and to articulate our commitment to our customers, Sustainable Timber Tasmania has in place a Customer Service Charter. The key elements of this Charter include:

- Sustainable Timber Tasmania is committed to meeting the needs of and developing strong relationships with our customers - providing reliable and valued services to our customers is fundamental to this commitment
- We will strive to be responsive and efficient in providing customers with valued professional service. Excellence in customer service will be realised through team effort and the ongoing relationships with our customers
- We will continue to manage the Permanent Timber Production Zone land in a sustainable and commercially viable manner to produce wood products that meet the requirements of our customers and for the benefit of the Tasmanian community generally

To achieve this, Sustainable Timber Tasmania employees will:



- Treat each customer with respect, in a fair and honest manner
- Do what we say we will do
- Be discreet and respect the confidentiality of each customer
- Develop an understanding of each customer's needs and expectations and seek to meet or exceed them
- Co-operate to identify, confirm and capture opportunities to improve the quality and value of Sustainable Timber Tasmania's business with each customer
- Establish and maintain effective two way communication, including in relation to supply and demand issues
- Use simple and clear language in written and verbal communications
- Treat identified problems in each business relationship promptly, including any contractual issues, and with a commitment to resolving them
- Proactively consult with our customers on the development and/or change to any policies which may impact on our businesses
- Review our performance regularly and strive for continuous improvement in our performance

## Staff

Internal engagement within Sustainable Timber Tasmania is vital to ensuring that Sustainable Timber Tasmania effectively and efficiently delivers on its responsibilities to sustainably manage and produce wood products from Tasmania's production forests. The organisation as a whole is committed to open, inclusive and effective engagement with staff, and recognises that this is a shared responsibility of managers and staff at all levels within the organisation. A range of mechanisms are in place to facilitate this engagement including:

- Use of staff meetings, emails and digital platforms to deliver key, timely information and news to all staff
- Monthly meetings of work groups
- Involvement of staff in the development of key plans and policies
- Monthly reporting on key operational and other deliverables
- Regular rotation of key management meetings across Sustainable Timber Tasmania's regional offices
- Regular review and update of relevant policies and procedures
- Review of staff training requirements, leadership development, and succession planning

## Interested Stakeholders

Sustainable Timber Tasmania engages with a wide range of interested stakeholder groups and individuals through a variety of mechanisms including:

- Ongoing direct contact by senior management with key stakeholders through regular meetings, phone calls and emails
- Seeking stakeholder input to the development of plans, activities and operations of potential interest to them through advertisements, mail outs, website information, meetings and phone calls. These include in relation to:
  - Draft Forest Management Plans



- Draft High Conservation Value Assessments and Management Plans
- Three Year Wood Production Plans
- Forest Practices Plans
- Planned burning operations
- Planned spraying operations
- Seeking stakeholder views on Sustainable Timber Tasmania's operations and performance
- Seeking stakeholder input on our forest management policies and procedures as part of our third party forest management, environmental and safety certification processes
- The production of an annual report, to inform stakeholders of our economic, environmental and social performance. The annual report is tabled in Parliament and made publically available to stakeholders via the Sustainable Timber Tasmania website
- Informing stakeholders of the five yearly reviews of sustainable yield of high quality sawlogs on Permanent Timber Production Zone land as required by the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement. The report is made publically available via the Sustainable Timber Tasmania website
- Informing stakeholders by proactively making information publicly available to meet and exceed the requirements of the *Right to Information Act 2009* via the website:
  - Sustainable Timber Tasmania, [www.sttas.com.au](http://www.sttas.com.au)
  - Information on this website includes:
    - Interactive map viewer
    - Publications
    - Guiding policies and plans
    - Other information of interest to the wider community
- Responding to informal requests for information prior to formal right to information applications
- The use of social media to notify and engage with stakeholders on issues of greatest interest to them
- Improving community knowledge and understanding of forest environments and their management, forest products and their processing, and human interactions with forest environments through information provided on our website, publications, staff interactions and ongoing support for the Forest Education Foundation and its programs.



## How do we manage engagement activities?

Sustainable Timber Tasmania has in place a number of processes that make stakeholder engagement a key and integrated part of our business. This includes:

- Regular reporting to the Sustainable Timber Tasmania Board via the Board's Environmental, Safety and Health Committee
- Monthly reporting and oversight by Sustainable Timber Tasmania's General Management Team and Field Operations Group
- A dedicated engagement team to assist the efforts of all staff in stakeholder engagement
- The use of a stakeholder engagement database to collate stakeholder details, record and report on engagement activities and agreed actions
- Incorporating stakeholder engagement requirements into Sustainable Timber Tasmania's standard operational and planning processes and systems

## What do we do when stakeholders do not agree with an outcome?

Sustainable Timber Tasmania will always aim to do our best to make relevant information available to stakeholders in a timely manner and in a way that they can easily access and understand. We also aim to engage with stakeholders and get their input in advance of making decisions on operations that may affect them. Sustainable Timber Tasmania will take this input into account along with other stakeholder input and other operational factors in determining the best way forward. However, despite our best efforts, we recognise that there will be times when we don't get it entirely right or when some stakeholders will be unhappy with the final outcome.

Sustainable Timber Tasmania has therefore put in place a Complaints Policy and a Dispute Resolution Process that clearly outlines the process for responding to complaints based upon the guiding principles of the Australian Standard AS ISO 10002-2006 Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations. Under the Complaints Policy, Sustainable Timber Tasmania:

- Is committed to constructive engagement with stakeholders as essential to continual improvement of its business
- Recognises that constructive engagement includes the right of stakeholders to expect that complaints will be treated courteously, respectfully and promptly
- Views the complaints and dispute resolution process as an opportunity to build relationships by addressing stakeholder concerns
- Aims to resolve all complaints and disputes as quickly as possible to the satisfaction of all parties

Our Dispute Resolution Procedure involves the following steps:

- Recognition of complaint
- Investigation by relevant operational managers
- Resolution and feedback
- Internal review if required
- External review if required
- Changes made if necessary and appropriate to improve Sustainable Timber Tasmania's systems and processes



All formal complaints received are recorded in our stakeholder consultation database, and follow up actions are monitored through regular reporting to operational managers, senior management team and Board.

## Improving our engagement with stakeholders

Sustainable Timber Tasmania recognises that effective stakeholder engagement is an ongoing journey - our needs, stakeholder needs, and our stakeholders will change over time. We will therefore seek to continually improve our processes to better meet the needs and expectations of our stakeholders.

Sustainable Timber Tasmania will systematically review its policies and procedures to identify areas for potential improvement. We also welcome input from stakeholders regarding any potential improvements. In particular Sustainable Timber Tasmania is interested in getting feedback on:

- Any stakeholders we have inadvertently missed
- Any additional issues that we should be engaging on
- The way we are engaging on issues, and
- How we provide feedback on issues

Input can be provided to the Engagement Team by:

- email [stakeholder@sttas.com.au](mailto:stakeholder@sttas.com.au), or
- writing to the Engagement Team, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, GPO Box 207, Hobart 7000, or
- calling the Engagement Team on 03 6169 2868

*Note: This Stakeholder Engagement Operational Approach will continue to evolve. It will be regularly revised and refined based on the feedback we receive from stakeholders and our experience in practical implementation of the proposed processes.*





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