

Letter to the Editor
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Sir,

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A walk through one of southern Tasmania's old growth forests reveals a mixture of age and species with evidence of multiple fire events, there are large amounts of rain forest trees and understorey plants – what most reasonable people would call true biodiversity.

When a natural fire occurs many trees are left alive and wet gullies are rarely burnt at all. The seedbed is retained; tree ferns quickly re-sprout and raise the humidity close to the soil stimulating natural regeneration. The natural jumble of burnt and unburnt branches and logs provide areas that are protected from grazing animals. The regeneration that occurs is of mixed species and partial shade in the forest yields slower growing and therefore stronger, more durable and attractive timber.

Compare this to Forestry Tasmania's total clearfell, windrowing, a year of drying before a holocaust of intense fire and then seeding the sterile ash bed with a single species. And all we have to look forward to a second grade sawlog and pulpwood cycle with large amounts of fertiliser and herbicide for subsequent crops.

To retain healthy working forests that are ecologically sustainably managed we must change immediately to low impact selective harvesting in all mixed native forests immediately.

Cathy Hawkins
Howden.