

Forestry and the Law

Forestry operations on private land are regulated in Tasmania.



Before undertaking any kind of forest practice, landholders should check the applicable legal requirements as part of their planning process.

Establishing and harvesting trees is subject to regulations in Tasmania, including on private land. The key piece of legislation that guides Tasmanian forestry operations is the Forest Practices Act 1985, which ensures the sustainable management of the state's forests according to environmental, social and economic outcomes.

What is a forest practice?

The term 'forest practice' is used to describe activities related to establishing and harvesting forests. As defined by the Forest Practices Act 1985, forest practices include:

- Harvesting and/or establishing trees
- Harvesting and regenerating native forest
- Clearing forests for other purposes
- Clearing and converting threatened native vegetation
- Constructing roads and quarries for the above purposes
- Harvesting tree ferns.

Forestry regulations

Before undertaking any forest practice, landholders should be aware of the applicable legislation and regulations in Tasmania, designed to ensure that forest practices are undertaken sustainably and safely.

Prior approval is highly likely to be required before undertaking forestry operations (including establishing plantations), through a certified Forest Practices Plan. Operations will be subject to legislation, regulations and the Forest Practices Code.

Landholders should consult with the Forest Practices Authority to discuss the scope of their activities and to seek advice.

Key considerations include:

FOREST PRACTICES CODE

The Forest Practices Code provides guidelines and standards designed to ensure reasonable protection of the natural and cultural values of the forest when forest practices are undertaken.

It is the main planning tool for forest practices in Tasmania, covering:

- planning
- building access into the forest (roads, bridges, quarries, etc.)
- harvesting of timber
- conservation of natural and cultural values
- establishing and maintaining forests.

The code is reviewed regularly to reflect contemporary knowledge and requirements, incorporating suggestions from scientists, government, the forestry industry and the public.

FOREST PRACTICES PLAN

Forest Practices Plans (FPPs) outline planned forest practices in accordance with the Forest Practices Code, and must be certified by a Forest Practices Officer before any activities take place.

FPPs provide details of the operation area, boundaries, roads, snig tracks, landings, bridges, streams and forest areas retained for conservation purposes. They also include prescriptions that protect natural and cultural values, planned harvest systems and reforestation.

Forest Practices Officers are authorised to prepare, certify and supervise Forest Practices Plans. Fees and charges are based on how complicated the FPP is.

If you are conducting any type of forestry practice in Tasmania, you are highly likely to require a Forest Practices Plan. There are a small number of exemptions.

Check whether you require a Forest Practices Plan before you start, with the Forest Practices Authority Check Before You Chop tool.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPROVAL

In some circumstances local government approval may also be required to ensure that forestry practices on private land are undertaken in accordance with local planning schemes.

Local planning laws vary. Councils are responsible for granting permits for activities and may apply conditions, depending on the scheme in your area. Some planning schemes determine forestry to be an ‘as of right’ land use, under which development approval is not necessary.

Landholders should check with their council to determine whether forestry is permitted and if there are any conditions under which operations should take place.

PRIVATE TIMBER RESERVES

A private timber reserve (PTR) is an area of private land set aside for forestry purposes. It may be an area of native forest, a tree plantation or land intended to be planted in the near future.

PTRs secure landholders’ rights to use their land for forestry purposes in the long term, and simplifies the planning process for forestry activities. Under a PTR:

- Local government approval is not required to establish, grow and harvest trees
- Other compatible activities can be undertaken
- Land is eligible for Primary Production Land classification and no land tax is payable.

Private Forests Tasmania processes PTR applications from landowners under a delegation from the Forest Practices Authority. The application process may include inspections of the area proposed as a PTR.

To learn more about PTRs and the application process, visit www.pft.tas.gov.au/private-timber-reserves-ptr

Do you require approval?

Before commencing any kind of forest practice, consider your legal responsibilities and seek advice from the Forest Practices Authority.

	Forest Practices Plan required?	Local government approval required?
Private land – not private timber reserve	Yes*	Possibly**
Private land – private timber reserve	Yes*	No

* Unless exempt – see the Forest Practices Authority Check Before You Chop tool.

** Check with your local government authority.



Forest Practices Authority

The Forest Practices Authority (FPA) is the statutory authority responsible for managing Tasmania's forest practices system, set up as part of the Forest Practices Act 1985.

The FPA operates independently alongside government and private businesses to regulate all forest practice activities. It includes the Forest Practices Advisory Council, which is a stakeholder group that advises the FPA on the operation of the forest practices system.

The FPA certifies Tasmania's Forest Practices Officers, who are authorised to prepare, certify and supervise Forest Practices Plans. Forest Practices Officers can work with landholders to:

- advise about the forest practices system
- prepare and certify forest practices plans
- supervise forest practices
- prepare and lodge compliance reports
- make variations to an existing forest practices plan.

References

Forest Practices Authority, 2024. Forest practices plans, Forest Practices Authority. <https://fpa.tas.gov.au/landowners/forest-practices-plans>

Local Government Forestry Consultative Committee, 2017. A guide to planning approvals for forestry in Tasmania, version 2.5, Forest Practices Authority.

Private Forests Tasmania, 2024. Private Timber Reserves, Private Forests Tasmania. <https://pft.tas.gov.au/private-timber-reserves-ptr>



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PO Box 180, Kings Meadows Tas 7249

(03) 6777 2720 | admin@pft.tas.gov.au

Tasmania is one of the best places in the world to manage forests for sustainable and profitable outcomes. To learn more about your options for renewable native forest management, contact the team at Private Forests Tasmania on their Tree Alliance hotline or through their general enquiries.

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