

to me

I am writing in response to consultation on the NSW Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) and to state my opposition to their renewal. The RFAs are a failed model for forest management.

We are living within the sixth extinction. Today, there are over 1000 threatened species and 100 threatened ecological communities in NSW alone. Australia's carbon emissions are increasing, threatening the health of our community. We know that trees provide the most effective form of carbon capture and storage, yet the RFAs continue to allow the logging of NSW's public native forests.

RFAs mean that the public native forest logging industry does not have to comply with the usual environmental impact assessments under Commonwealth environment laws. While every other industry must comply with these laws, logging in habitat for federally listed threatened species occurs routinely in areas covered by RFAs.

RFAs were initially developed as a model to facilitate multiple uses of public native forests, including timber extraction and conservation, and to underpin a stable forestry industry. They have failed to meet these aims as the following facts attest:

Populations of forest animals – including koalas – have plummeted over the life of RFAs; Ecosystem processes in forests, like the carbon and water cycles, have been disrupted; Hollow-bearing trees, key to the survival of wildlife, have been reduced by logging; Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management has not occurred; Forestry job numbers have steadily declined, and subsidies keep logging financially viable; The NSW taxpayer has repeatedly footed the bill to buy out logging contracts.

I am concerned that the current process is not a genuine review of the performance of RFAs and whether they have met their aims. If it were genuine, the Berejiklian and Turnbull governments would not have already committed to their extension. The overdue progress report on the second and third five-yearly reviews fails to provide adequate data for the public, NSW and Commonwealth governments to assess the performance of the RFAs. It also fails to take account of new knowledge, particularly on climate change and its increasing threat to ecological systems, biodiversity and human wellbeing – social, health, mental, and economic.

We know from recent polling in the seats of Ballina and Lismore that the vast majority of people (90%) support protecting public native forests for wildlife, water supplies, carbon stores and recreation. 70% support the creation of new national parks to protect koalas. Less than 10% support the logging of forests for timber, woodchips and biomass burning.

Public native forest logging is unsustainable. It is time that our state forests, the property of the citizens of NSW, were managed in the best interests of the public. Proposals like the National Parks Association NSW's (NPA) Forests For All seeks to protect all public forests and increase public access for recreation, nature-based tourism, health and well-being and education. This proposal is supported by several health and education organisations.

In light of these comments, I recommend that the NSW and Commonwealth governments:

1. Not renew RFAs because they are a failed model for forest management;
2. Heed the accumulated evidence and use the expiry of the RFAs to trigger a just transition of workers out of the native forest logging industry; and
3. Protect public native forests to ensure our wildlife, water and carbon stores is safeguarded for future generations by implementing strategies like NPA's Great Koala National Park and Forests For All plan.

RFAs were a well-intended effort to reconcile logging and conservation. Given the accumulated evidence that they haven't worked, rolling over the RFAs will constitute a decision to entirely favour the logging industry over the public interest. This will prolong conflict and hasten the demise of threatened species. I urge you not to take this path.

I confirm that my submission does not contain sensitive information and can be published in full on the Department of Primary Industries website.

I understand that the Department of Primary Industries may contact me about my submission.

Yours sincerely,