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APPENDICES

A  Stakeholder meeting agenda
1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

This report contains a summary of the stakeholder and community feedback received during the consultation process undertaken on behalf of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) for the renewal of the NSW Regional Forest Agreements.

1.2 About the Regional Forest Agreements

Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) are 20-year joint State-Commonwealth agreements that underpin the sustainable management of native forests across Australia. There are three Regional Forest Agreements in NSW: Eden (expires on 26 August 2019), North East (expires on 31 March 2020) and Southern (expires on 24 April 2021).

The NSW and Australian Governments (the Parties) have commenced work to extend the State’s three RFAs. Alongside this process, the NSW Government has released an implementation review report about the existing RFAs. This report was exhibited for public comment for 9 weeks (from December 2017 – late February 2018). Mr Ewan Waller was appointed by the Parties as the independent reviewer to assess the report and consider public submissions, and produce an independent reviewer’s report detailing his findings and recommendations.

The success of consultation on both the RFA review and renewal will rely on the careful coordination of these two processes.

1.3 About the consultation process

A range of community and stakeholder consultation activities were undertaken as part of the wider RFA renewal consultation process. Public submissions could be made online, via the ‘Have Your Say’ web portal, by post or email.

These processes were also complemented by 19 meetings held in metropolitan and regional centres across NSW. Participation in the meetings was promoted by the Department through the DPI website, social media channels, local media and through notifications to relevant stakeholder groups.

Meetings were attended by representatives of NSW and Australian Government agencies. Meetings were facilitated by staff from consulting firm, Elton Consulting.

In addition to input provided at community meetings, the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) received more than 3,200 submissions throughout the RFA public consultation process.

Invites were sent by the Department of Primary Industries to representatives from industry, local government and environmental groups to attend the stakeholder sessions. The Department also conducted consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders during a separate engagement process. Community drop-in sessions were advertised in local papers, the NSW Government’s ‘Have Your Say’ website and on the Department of Primary Industries website. The table below outlines the meetings undertaken throughout the consultation period.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location and facilitator</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
<th>Number of attendees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 6 February</td>
<td><strong>Lismore</strong>&lt;br&gt;Lismore Gateway Motel and Restaurant&lt;br&gt;99 Ballina Road, Lismore&lt;br&gt;Facilitator: Brendan Blakeley</td>
<td>10:00am to 11:00am Industry and local government stakeholder meeting&lt;br&gt;1:30am to 12:30pm Environmental stakeholder meeting&lt;br&gt;1:00pm to 2:30pm Drop-in session</td>
<td>4 Industry and local government meeting&lt;br&gt;8 Environmental meeting&lt;br&gt;25 community drop in session</td>
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<td>Wednesday 7 February</td>
<td><strong>Coffs Harbour</strong>&lt;br&gt;Coffs Ex-Services Club&lt;br&gt;1 Vernon Street, Coffs Harbour&lt;br&gt;Facilitator: Deborah Palmer</td>
<td>10:00am to 11:00am Industry and local government stakeholder meeting&lt;br&gt;11:30am to 12:30pm Environmental stakeholder meeting&lt;br&gt;1:00pm to 2:30pm Drop-in session</td>
<td>14 Industry and local government meeting&lt;br&gt;3 Environmental meeting&lt;br&gt;24 community drop in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 8 February</td>
<td><strong>Bulahdelah</strong>&lt;br&gt;Bulahdelah Bowling Club&lt;br&gt;50 Jackson Street, Bulahdelah&lt;br&gt;Facilitator: Deborah Palmer</td>
<td>9:00am to 11:00am Combined stakeholder meeting and drop-in session</td>
<td>31 combined stakeholder meeting and drop-in session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 13 February</td>
<td><strong>Eden</strong>&lt;br&gt;Eden Fishermen’s Recreational Club&lt;br&gt;217 Imlay Street, Eden&lt;br&gt;Facilitator: Kalina Koloff</td>
<td>10:00am to 11:00am Industry and local government stakeholder meeting&lt;br&gt;11:30am to 12:30pm Environmental stakeholder meeting&lt;br&gt;1:00pm – 2:30pm Drop-in session</td>
<td>5 Industry and local government meeting&lt;br&gt;12 Environmental meeting&lt;br&gt;55 community drop in</td>
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## The focus of discussion

At each meeting presentations included an overview of the RFA renewal process and the NSW and Australian Government commitment to preparing another set of agreements for three regions in NSW. Discussions were structured around the following key questions:

- The existing RFAs were developed 20 years ago. Many things have changed since they were developed. What have been the key changes since the RFAs were developed (for example, the context and operating environment)?

- What are some of the issues particularly relevant to this region that need to be considered as the RFA is being negotiated?

- We are considering a five-year rolling extension mechanism for RFAs, subject to outcomes from the previous five-year review. What are the benefits and disadvantages of this approach?

While the content of the RFAs is primarily strategic, much of the commentary focussed on operational issues related to forestry, particularly harvesting of native timber.
2 Summary of key issues

The engagement process revealed polarised views on forestry within RFA areas.

For those associated with the forestry industry, RFAs are viewed as a workable model that help to provide some long-term certainty for investment and development. Having a secure supply and the capacity to maintain a critical resource mass provides a fundamental underpinning of the industry in each region covered by an RFA.

Industry noted that new RFAs should address impacts of climate change to better respond to:

- More active management required to reduce risks associated with fire events
- Manage water run-off and water uptake by regrowth
- Increased migration of fauna
- Opportunities arising from the carbon economy
- Changes in the industry such as, manufactured timbers, wood production for biomass, chemical extraction etc.

A key area for improvement was not the RFAs themselves but in the timeliness of the review process. Presently, reviews and reporting are well overdue and it is difficult to gauge a full picture of the forest estate in each region. It was noted that without this information industry was “flying blind” and public confidence in the agreements is being eroded.

Industry representatives also noted the new RFAs should provide greater guidance on how social economic and environmental values are balanced and considered when looking at forestry being tied up for conservation uses. While this may have some perceived environmental advantages, important social and economic considerations were being overlooked. It was also observed that:

- these are not necessarily competing values
- in well-managed forests all three of these values could and do coexist
- the conservation estate (primarily the National Park estate) is not being effectively managed and is not being held to a similar level of account as the State forest areas.

Industry also supported the rolling five-year renewal process following timely reviews.

Conversely, environmental groups did not support RFAs and wish to see an end to harvesting of native forests in the public and private estate. Of particular concern was the pressure on habitat for fauna and flora arising from the cumulative impacts of forestry, agriculture, land clearing and urban expansion. This has meant that in many areas, forest reserves were increasingly becoming:

- a place of refuge for displaced species
- corridors to enable migration of species to new areas
- valuable carbon sinks

A number of immediate impacts of harvesting on the environment were also noted. These included:

- injury and death of animals and birds
- increased sedimentation in water courses
- soil erosion and compaction
- increased fire risk in regrowth areas
- loss of scenic values and impacts upon tourism

As with industry representatives, environmental groups also noted the frequent failure to undertake timely reviews. The absence of current data and reporting made it difficult for the community to understand the impacts the industry is having at a regional and state level.

Another commonly heard issue was that compliance and enforcement is under-resourced and the present regimes do not serve as disincentive to poor harvesting practices. This, combined with the inability to bring civil enforcement, was viewed as only adding to a lack confidence in the ability to regulate the industry and hold it to account.
3 Lismore

3.1 Overview

The Lismore consultation sessions were held on 6 February at the Lismore Gateway Motel and Restaurant, 99 Ballina Road, Lismore. The session times were:

» 10:00am to 11:00am: Industry and local government stakeholder meeting
» 1:30am to 12:30pm: Environmental stakeholder meeting
» 1:00pm to 2:30pm: Community drop-in session

The sessions were facilitated by Brendan Blakeley, Elton Consulting.

3.2 Industry and local government session feedback

» The biggest change that has occurred is the dwindling number of players within the industry and ongoing closure of saw mills – it is therefore crucial to secure a critical mass of supply to keep remaining saw mills open.

» The RFA should respond to the trend for greater integration between harvesting and manufacture of timber products.

» The timber industry needs certainty in order to invest in growing trees, harvesting and processing timber and manufacturing timber products.

» Climate change is a significant factor that needs to be considered in the new RFAs.

» The carbon economy also needs to be reflected in the new RFAs – however, the agreements will be developed before the shape of this new economy is known.

» There is a poor understanding of contemporary forestry practice within the community - more education on forestry is needed.

» There will be a greater emphasis over time on plantation timber (particularly native timber plantations) and this needs to be supported within the forthcoming RFA.

» Concerns expressed about National Parks management of forests which form a large part of overall estate.

» The Managed Investment Schemes (MIS) approach to plantations generally has not worked and should not be encouraged.

» There needs to be greater work done on mapping timber stocks and environmental values so that a balanced solution can be developed.

» There is a large native forest resource on private lands, not just State forests.

» There doesn’t need to be a forest war. Overall, the vision should be for an industry and environment that is sustainable into the long-term. The objective should be to have nett increase in forested areas within the region through plantations and rehabilitation/regeneration of harvested areas.
3.3 Environmental session feedback

Discussions occurred in the context of the groups clearly stated opposition to any logging of native forests along the Eastern seaboard and within this region.

The following points were noted:

**Consultation**
- Reservations about consultation and sought reassurance that Government would listen.
- Timeframe for engagement was not adequate.

**Issues with RFAs**
- The RFAs are driven by industry needs and security of supply rather than a need to consider and protect the environment.
- They look at forests primarily as a resource and do not look at their role as an ecosystem within an even broader ecosystem.
- Over the past 20 years the importance of native forests in terms of habitat values has become even more critical due to other pressures such as climate change and encroachments from development, road infrastructure and clearing of land for agriculture.
- The Estate is becoming increasingly fractured and disconnected which means flora and fauna species are even more susceptible to loss and extinction.
- RFAs need to:
  - provide greater certainty around the creation of corridors and securing habitat values
  - respond to the increasing number of threatened species and ecological communities
  - specifically spell out requirements for improved harvesting practices that limit damage to the environment and particularly improve riparian management
- Too much emphasis is on timber as a resource and not enough about requirements for environmental sustainability.
- Modern forestry harvesting with machines and poor operators causes too much environmental damage. Sustainable forestry needs to look at sustainable extraction.
- There is a need for greater information and transparency.
  - There is very limited opportunity for public oversight of forestry practices that are occurring on private land.
  - The public cannot readily access Plans of Management so we can understand what exactly is required of contractors. Plans of Management for harvesting operations on public and private land should be freely available.
  - The community should write the review reports, not government.
Compliance and Enforcement

» Significant concerns were expressed regarding the NSW Environment Protection Authority’s (EPA) compliance role.

» It was noted that the EPA had been under-resourced and under-funded.

» The EPA has not been enforcing breaches, and the penalties as they exist are not sufficient to discourage poor practice.

» The enforcement that is occurring is only driven by the community raising problems and at times pressuring government to respond. Even then the response is viewed by those present at the meeting as inadequate.

» The community were being driven out of the forests under the guise of work health and safety.

Other

» Any document should be easy to navigate in plain English and point to supporting documents to make it easier to understand all of the requirements regarding forestry agreements.

» Changes to be reflected:

  > Greater and increased pressure on threatened species and species loss
  > Stronger community demand on transparency
  > A community demand for retention of existing native forests

» Planted monocultures aren’t the way to go - where we are making plantations or regenerating harvested area areas there should be a mix of local native species to increase overall habitat.

» The forestry estate is a significant contributor to biodiversity and reducing atmospheric carbon which is critical at a time of increased climate change.

3.4 Community drop-in session feedback

20 people attended the session. See appendix B.
4 Coffs Harbour

4.1 Overview

The Coffs Harbour consultation sessions were held on 7 February 2018 at the Coffs Ex-Services Club, 1 Vernon Street, Coffs Harbour. The session times were:
» 10:00am to 11:00am: Industry and local government stakeholder meeting
» 11:30am to 12:30pm: Environmental stakeholder meeting
» 1:00pm to 2:30pm: Community drop-in session

The sessions were facilitated by Deborah Palmer, Elton Consulting.

4.2 Industry and local government session feedback

14 participants, plus DPI and Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) staff.

1. What are the key changes since the RFAs were developed?

» Support for the intention behind Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs). When they were developed they were idealistic, but reviews of the RFAs have not taken place. This means there is a lack of information available to industry to understand the success/failure of the RFAs.

» Clear concern by a number of participants about the failure to renegotiate the Wood Supply Agreements (WSA). WSAs will operate until 2023, but there has been no re-negotiation of the agreements. Industry needs certainty around the WSAs to be able to effectively plan for their businesses. There was criticism that Boral has been granted an extension to their WSA till 2028 while other industry players have no certainty.

» There was widespread dissatisfaction within the group about the lack of communication with industry by Forestry Corporation about the status of the WSAs.

» There needs to be greater transparency about the status of key policies/agreements with industry; e.g. the review process and the WSAs.

» When asked how transparency/communication with industry could be improved, the group suggested regular emails and links to information would be helpful. The group also supported having newsletter updates. It was suggested that information should come through both government agencies and industry bodies. There was strong support for information exchange/engagement through regular meetings in the region.

2. What has worked well in terms of RFAs? What hasn’t worked well?

» The group suggested that the RFAs had been a good thing for industry, but the WSAs were not working so well. The group held a strong view that there was not enough output of quality logs which impacts on the sustainability of industry, particularly the smaller mills.
» Strong support for the suggestion that there needs to be a constant supply of timber for industry.

» Expanding plantations was widely seen by participants as a good thing as this can supplement the native forests.

» One participant suggested the RFA areas need to be well managed. The right wood needs to be grown in the right areas. An example was given of white gum wood – it grows slowly. Choosing this kind of wood does not ensure a healthy supply of wood for years to come.

» One participant noted the different end dates for the three forestry agreements and suggested it would be ideal to move to RFAs with the same end date.

» One participant noted how complex the RFAs are – they are long documents that are difficult to navigate and understand.

» Throughout the group, there was little understanding of how all of the policy/regulatory instruments fit together and which body/agency is responsible for the delivery of each – e.g. RFAs, WSAs, integrated forestry operations approvals (IFOAs). It was suggested that a diagram be produced that shows how these fit together and then shared widely with industry to improve understanding.

3. What are some of the issues particularly relevant to this region that need to be considered as the RFA is being negotiated?

» A representative from local government noted Forestry Corporation does not pay local government rates for the use of roads and bridges. This is a problem that is heightened in this area because of the number of bridges. It was suggested that Forestry Corporation is a business that makes significant profit, so it should pay rates to local councils to support the upkeep of local roads and bridges. It was suggested that RFAs may be an instrument to address this.

» One participant noted the timber industry is a key employer in the area. Negative changes to the timber industry would have a significant impact on local communities. It was stressed that the RFAs need to take into account the socio-economic importance of the timber industry and account for both direct and indirect employment.

» Bellingen Shire Council noted the significant koala population in the area and the importance of ensuring appropriate levels of koala habitat. A study has been released by Council that identifies this population and the key habitat corridors. This study is available on the website. Council undertook to forward the study to forests@industry.nsw.gov.au

» It was noted there is a high level of diversity in the range of timber produced in the area.

» One participant outlined the area is a significant producer of hardwood poles. These poles are widely used in critical infrastructure. Most of the hardwood power poles for NSW and Australia are derived from the north coast, and plantations would not be able to supplement those derived from the native forests.

4. We are considering a five-year rolling extension mechanism to RFAs subject to outcomes from the previous five-yearly review. What are the benefits and disadvantages of this approach?

» The group supported the proposal of a five-year rolling extension but noted that it was difficult to commit to this if there was no common understanding of how the RFAs were currently working.

» The group noted that the RFA needs to contain measures that can be readily monitored and reviewed to ensure successful implementation.
» The RFAs were described as having a good structure and providing certainty for industry. It was noted they needed to provide a horizon to industry. Without a horizon, industry does not have certainty and will not re-invest back into the resource.
» It was suggested there would be better biodiversity outcomes if RFAs remain in place.
» There was widespread support in the group for a more modernised reporting arrangement. A five-year rolling extension would provide an incentive to also undertake more frequent reviews of the implementation of the RFAs.

4.3 Environmental session feedback

3 participants, plus DPI and DAWR staff.

Discussion in this session was undertaken in a more conversational way, rather than focussing on the four questions. Participants stayed for 20 minutes to talk with staff. Key points raised covered:
» Concern that Forestry Corporation does not pay local government rates for the use of roads and bridges. Significant concern Forestry Corporation land is ‘unrateable’ by local councils. It was suggested that RFAs may be an instrument to address this.
» The significant koala population in the area was noted and the importance of ensuring appropriate levels of koala habitat.
» Need to adopt biodiversity harvesting practices that limit damage to the environment and particularly improve riparian management.
» Concern that consultation had not occurred in Port Macquarie.
» Concern about the late notification to council about the consultation sessions.

4.4 Community drop-in session feedback

Please see appendix B.
5 Bulahdelah

5.1 Overview

The Bulahdelah consultation session was run as a combined session of industry, environment and community members all attending the same session. The session was held at the Bulahdelah Bowling Club, 50 Jackson Street, Bulahdelah. The session was held from 9:00am to 11:00am and was facilitated by Deborah Palmer, Elton Consulting.

5.2 Combined feedback

31 participants, plus DPI and DAWR staff.

We heard:
» Increased harvesting as a result of the RFA (confusion about the arrangements – IFOAs and RFA).
» Feedback is at the operational level, not the RFA area.
» Concern that there will be increased clear felling.
» Concern about burning of forests – the forest will be cut down to generate electricity (confusion about use of residue) – impact on animals (wombats etc).
» Carbon calculation of emissions is not calculated correctly.
» Use recycled plastic for building materials rather than timber.
» Industry – new products and new technologies – e.g. wooden shipping containers that contain houses (instant build); plantation investment.
» More monitoring and auditing (cut staffing, so means you don’t monitor forests as a whole).
» There is an opportunity to grow more trees on farms for farmers – Local Land Services (LLS) being involved in the process (not EPA).
» Climate change needs to be addressed in RFAs.
» Support for local communities as timber is a dying industry – help to move into sustainable industry practice.
» People are buying “Carbon forests”.
» Biodiversity – look at diversity of species – not just blackbutt.
» Industry – supportive of five-year rolling extension – long term security perspective. Environment representatives not supportive of this.
» Industry – suggested a pulp mill on the north coast would assist to better manage the forest. Therefore this would provide a market for smaller trees, which would allow the forest to be thinned.
Perception that the NSW Government subsidises the Forestry Industry.

The role of Forest Corporation – shouldn’t make a profit, it only needs to break even.

Perception – the balances are out of balance. Get the balance right between logging and diversity. Confusion of what sustainable yield is.

Industry – there needs to be greater education of the facts.

6 Eden

6.1 Overview

The Eden consultation sessions were held on 13 February 2018 at the Eden Fishermen’s Recreational Club, 217 Imlay Street, Eden. The session times were:
» 10:00am to 11:00am: Industry and local government stakeholder meeting
» 11:30am to 12:30pm: Environmental stakeholder meeting
» 1:00pm – 2:30pm: Community drop-in session
The sessions were facilitated by Kalina Koloff, Elton Consulting.

We heard:
» A lot of feedback is at the operational level and there is some confusion about the distinction between the implementation review (EPA) and the RFAs.
» More monitoring and auditing is required to really understand the impacts (positive and negative) of forestry.
» Concern about risks to forests from catastrophic fire, with both Industry and Environment groups indicating this is a major issue in the region, with the main risk arising from lack of active management of the conservation estate.
» Some support to address climate risks in new RFAs.
» Some feedback about lack of promotion or awareness about consultation, and that Bega and Bermagui would have been better locations than Eden and Bateman’s Bay (mainly Environment groups).
» Biodiversity is seen as important by all stakeholders with Industry asserting logging promotes species diversity, and environment groups claiming the impacts are devastating to local populations – both groups quoted evidence to support their positions.

6.2 Industry and local government feedback

» Viability of the local industry is at risk with significant decreases in resource availability – a minimum economy of scale is required for long term sustainability: there should be no further reduction in forest access.
» Original RFA resource estimation was flawed and did not take into account variability – needed to be ground truthed.
» There needs to be a much greater link between the RFA and the IFOA.
» Resource certainty is essential for the sustainability of the industry. Saw log resources are dwindling and only environment objectives are being met.
» The Current and Adequate Reserves process is a concern.
» RFAs provide compensation for loss of resources, but as reduction in available area has happened through the IFOA it doesn’t attract compensation.
> The reserves are not managed properly and are not delivering environmental objectives, and all environment attention is on the remaining timber forest resource. The emphasis is now on environmental concerns rather than timber reserves.
> Far more forest has gone into reserves in this area than was agreed to through the RFA.
> It is estimated that locally there will be less than 5,000 m$^3$ available by 2031 – not enough to sustain an industry.
> Active landscape management (including in adjacent protected areas and National Parks) is required to mitigate the risks of catastrophic fire and predation by feral pests. “Lock it up and leave it” is a model that is failing.
> Working forests also protect the environment (they closely mirror Aboriginal management).
» Identification of Threatened Ecological communities and Endangered Ecological Communities or Threatened Species has brought about a further restriction on logging – this is seen as a land grab and restriction on agreed access to resources.
» Job security is a major concern, with the industry seen to make a significant contribution to the social and economic sustainability of Eden. The port depends on forestry.
» The concept of 5-year rolling reviews is welcomed and would help provide investment certainty for businesses in the region.
» There needs to be equal emphasis on social, economic and environmental outcomes.
» The EPA regulates environmental issues but there is nothing to adjudicate social and economic considerations.
» Local government specific:
> Concerned for the future of both the forests and forest-based businesses
> Hear contradictory claims and don’t know who to believe

6.3 Environment session feedback

» Period for submissions should be extended.
» Did not want to participate in the meeting – supported NPA and NCC decision to Boycott.
» Seek an end to forestry operations in Eden and development of a plan to remediate logged sites and the site of the Pulp Mill.
» Consider that the impact of current RFAs has not delivered on stated environmental outcomes - need to expand the conservation estate.
» There is lack of effective monitoring, compliance and prosecution for breaches.
» IFOA prescriptions must be strengthened. There should be more than one IFOA to cover different situations and locations and they need to be followed and enforced.
» EPA fines are not a disincentive – they treat multiple breaches as one and legal costs outweigh fines
» Members of the community should be able bring about civil enforcement in the event of breaches.
» The EPA is taking too long to investigate breaches, making them difficult to prosecute.
» Noted 2016 State of the Environment shows decrease in biodiversity – this indicates a failure of RFAs (and other programs) to deliver on environmental outcomes.
» Concern that there will be increased clear felling and destructive logging with the introduction of larger machinery and more automated processes.
» A view that logging and animal conservation/preservation are incompatible.
» The hardwood industry is not economically sustainable. Concern that the Pulp Mill is in fact operating at a financial loss with timber being sourced from districts more than a couple of hours away.
» RFAs need to consider carbon sequestration and opportunities arising from carbon economy.
» With climate change, resilience becomes even more important - animals need to be able to adapt and migrate, and fires are a greater problem in a forest where tree species are all of similar age.
» Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) is turning over forests too quickly – they want trees at less than 20 years age as they’re smaller and easier to chip and ship – some older trees are left but they get damaged by mechanical harvesters and struggle to survive.
» FCNSW are not doing thinning operations – saplings are too dense and make an increased fire risk.
» Silvicultural practices (using heavy machinery) not appropriate for land, soil types, forest regeneration – soil gets compacted and seeds don't grow.
» With extensive delays in reviews and reports there is little community trust in agreements or the process.
7 Batemans Bay

7.1 Overview

The Batemans Bay consultation sessions were held on 14 February 2018 at the Coachhouse Marina Resort, 49 Beach Road, Batemans Bay. The session times were:
- 9:30am to 10:30am: Industry stakeholder meeting
- 11:00am to 12:00pm: Environmental stakeholder meeting
- 12:30pm to 2:00pm: Community drop-in session

The sessions were facilitated by Kalina Koloff, Elton Consulting.

We heard:
- Feedback concentrated at the operational level and there is some confusion about the distinction between the implementation review (EPA) and the RFAs.
- More monitoring and auditing is required to really understand the impacts (positive and negative) of forestry and there was strong criticism regarding lack of review and reporting on current RFA performance (*Note: Annual reporting is available but it appears it is not widely accessed by stakeholders*).
- Concern about risks to forests from catastrophic fire with both Industry and Environment groups indicating this is a major issue in the region, with the main risk arising from lack of active management of the conservation estate and limited access in some areas of National parks.
- Some feedback about the set-up of the drop-in session with support for small group discussions, also a request for a short presentation to begin or an information station where interested people could hear an overview of the project.
- Suggestions that the sessions and invitees were poorly publicised with several key stakeholders (local Apiarists and previous RFA Panel members not known to agencies or invited).

7.2 Industry and local government session feedback

- The viability of the local industry is at risk with significant decreases in resource availability – a minimum economy of scale is required for long term sustainability: there should be no further reduction in forest access.
- Regulatory burden should not impact industries’ ability to operate lawfully (local fishing and farming decline given as examples).
- Successive scope creep is reducing availability of resources – strong support for the identified production forests being able to be permanently managed for production.
- The reduction of available production areas puts pressure on industry to log more intensively in the remaining coupes.
» Private Native Forest (PNF) rules/requirements are too complex to bother.

» As availability of Australian product decreases we’re buying more imported timber and products - those countries may have scant regard for environment standards.

» More access for forestry (conservation exclusions in State Forest should be offset by access to conservation estate). Eurobodalla Shire needs a strong forestry industry and the RFAs need to recognize economic benefits - access rights need to be defined and sustained – environmental requirements should be in national parks or offset.

» There are good environmental outcomes in State Forests post-harvest and these should be highlighted. Durras State Forest is an example - it was previously completely harvested and is now a beautiful forest though without proper management it risks becoming choked.

» There need to be more positive stories about forestry – we can have both timber outcomes and positive environmental outcomes.

» State Forest tenures provide increased community access – don’t lock it all up (in fact, open up more!); access to State Forest provides another economic development opportunity for the community.

» The original RFA did not identify conservation and production outcomes in a sensible or effective way, making it hard to know what is being strived for.

» Suggestion that alternative uses that are compatible with logging also be considered and promoted e.g. riding and walking trails.

» 82% of the Shire is native forest with a significant percentage in National Parks Estate. Protection and growth of logging industries is one of the few opportunities for new jobs.

» Active landscape management (including in adjacent protected areas and National Parks) is required to mitigate the risks of catastrophic fire and predation by feral pests.

» Communications regarding RFAs and Forestry in general needs to be improved.
  > They should use simple English and have clear definitions of terms.
  > Lack of community knowledge of the RFA review, feedback process and timelines.

» Flying Fox camp has buffers around it and provides an important habitat. There was big influx of flying foxes last year and having healthy forests close to urban areas kept them away from the town.

» The concept of 5-year rolling reviews is welcome.

» Local Apiarists seek ongoing access to State Forests and require them to be in good condition with diverse ages – noted that many species don’t flower suitably until over 50 years.

7.3 Environmental session feedback

» Strong opposition to current RFAs and no support for a continuation for another term. Disappointment that they have not been updated and reviews are considerably overdue. Also, Annual ESFM reports have not been done in timely manner.

» There is no evidence available to show that sustainable forestry management goals are being achieved or that RFAs are working.

» Contend that there is limited, if any, viable timber left in the forest and what is being harvested now is marginal quality and only suitable for pulp.
Noted that there is a hearing set for the High Court to register Native Title over much of the South Coast Region and that it would trigger better and more comprehensive consultation with traditional owners.

Issues of concern included:

- Examples of poor practices with regard to cultural heritage sites were given;
- Exemptions to Forestry under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act);
- Huge number of daily breaches not being documented;
- Areas on the south coast have not undertaken environmental impact assessments;
- Lack of funding for regulators means there are not enough people to cover the area;
- Citizens are not able to prosecute because of EPBC Act (s. 69z);
- The 5-yearly review lacks rigour and doesn’t include compliance numbers from EPA annual reports;
- Forest Management Zones (FMZ) part of NPWS estate keeps getting eroded; and
- Species such as koalas have disappeared from Eurobodalla Shire, and species dependent on old growth forest are rapidly dwindling.

In view of this there should be an end to forestry operations immediately.

Consider that the impact of current RFAs has not delivered on stated environmental outcomes – there is poor evaluation of sites prior to issuing permits to clear; for example, there are a lack of night surveys being undertaken.

There is little evidence of effective monitoring, compliance and prosecution for perceived breaches, many of which have been documented but not acted upon. This is causing significant community frustration and anger.

Opportunities for carbon sequestration as a valuable alternative income source, would deliver better economic outcomes as well as assist Government in meeting international climate agreements. The Paris Agreement is currently looking at forests and carbon.

Clear-felling and not actively managing regrowth means the forest consumes huge amount of water and elevates fire risk.

Cynicism about the FCNSW claim that they are adopting Aboriginal fire management practices, but FCNSW drop incendiary devices and don’t manage the process (they walk away).

Better cooperation and collaboration with Aboriginal people is required in managing forest resources.

Environmental groups are deeply skeptical of a five-yearly rolling review process based on current RFA experience.

IFOA prescriptions need to be strengthened.
8 Tumut

8.1 Overview

The Tumut consultation sessions were held on 15 February 2018 at the Tumut Golf Club Fairway Drive, Tumut. The session times were:

- 9:30am to 10:30am: Industry stakeholder meeting
- 11:00am to 12:00 pm: Environmental stakeholder meeting
- 12:30pm to 2:00pm: Community drop-in session

The sessions were facilitated by Kalina Koloff, Elton Consulting.

We heard:

- Major issues about supply for production, with most operators expressing concern about supply from both native forests and plantations to meet existing demand.
- Example of a local operator who has made a significant investment in upgraded factory infrastructure but there is not enough supply to operate at maximum capacity – another 20 jobs could be offered if more supply was available.
- Discussion about transport issues and regulations at local shire level identified as problems for accessing some mills – in one example a long diversion was required because of restrictions on a local bridge/local road even though the mill was only 150 metres away.
- Export markets are a strong incentive for some operators who can get better access to distribution ports than local mills – coupled with the strong Australian dollar this is impacting local economy.
- Access to skilled staff across the board is difficult with transport sector and machinery operators under-employed in the region.
- Also, climate change is gradually pushing economically productive plantation investment eastward from the Hume Highway in this region.
- More plantations mean more carbon sequestration.
- In summary the biggest constraints are:
  - road infrastructure;
  - new land for plantations;
  - shortage of skilled qualified staff in harvesting, haulage, forest management mill operation etc.; and
  - significant constraints in getting into truck driving (associated with insurance).
- Suggestion that RFAs consider “tenure blind” arrangements for management that plans for landscape scale conservation outcomes.
- Regulatory burden should not be so onerous as to impact the industry’s ability to operate profitably. Presently industry is being lawfully squeezed at the margins with greater compliance and operating costs eating away at profits.
» Discussion about land tenure options for other uses including apiary and grazing in the forest – with suggestion that these types of activities, when managed well, assist in better biodiversity outcomes, lower fuel loads and less water consumption.

» Requirements for any lease holders accessing State Forests – should be required to manage weed dispersal along access roads etc.

» Discussion about weed management in plantation forests – to ensure better condition of land and ensure adjacent farms are not impacted.

» Regeneration of harvested areas with same diversity of species as removed – help promote a complex system.

» Rules applied to forestry industry are more complex and detailed than for other land tenure, should be the same (fairness).

» Lack of staff resources in NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) as well as some parts of State Forests means access for fires, control of weeds etc. is not effective.

» Economic drivers and production capacity from technology has increased demand for logs, as well as the ability to take and use smaller logs for chip.

» Some resistance to plantation pine and has a more intensive water requirement.

» Practice of clear felling means recovery isn’t as diverse or what is left behind is not as useful – partially this is driven by tech and partially by decreasing access to resources.

» Fire management is poorly managed – need more resources.

» Five-year rolling review very much supported.

> 20 years is too long to leave the RFAs not updated;

> Larger term security guarantee is essential; and

> A plantation takes more than 20 years to grow and a native forest harvest rotation is about 20 years.

» Industry needs certainty – we can manage a “no”, but uncertainty and continual change makes it very difficult to plan and operate a sustainable business.
9 Sydney

9.1 Overview

The Sydney consultation sessions were held at the Department of Primary Industries, MLC Centre, 19 Martin Place, Sydney. The session times were:

- 10:00am to 11:30am Industry stakeholder meeting
- 12:00pm to 1:30pm Environmental stakeholder meeting

The sessions were facilitated by Brendan Blakeley, Elton Consulting.

9.2 Industry and local government session feedback

- Environmental considerations have outweighed social/economic values, there needs to be equal emphasis on all three criteria.
- Environmental values are protected by legislation; social and community values need more clear protection.
- Multiple uses/values should not be described as “competing” – all values should be able to be managed at the same time.
- A thorough and independent Community Impact Assessment that looks at social and economic values is required for any proposal that may restrict or reduce industry access.
- Over time there has been constant movement of State Forest to National Parks without any offsets. Presently there is little certainty for industry in many areas covered by RFAs.
- The current system is very rigid. Flexibility is needed if they are to accommodate new values or priorities which are likely to arise over a 20-year timeframe such as koalas or new endangered ecological communities (EECs). The agreements need to have some “give and take” so if land is set aside for koalas then it should be offset elsewhere to maintain a sustainable industry.
- There are major reservations about the nationally agreed criteria for the protection of forest biodiversity, old-growth and wilderness values known as the Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) System. There is a belief that this system is actually eroding environmental values and does not properly recognise traditional Aboriginal community interests in the legislative framework.
- It is also informed by a Northern European wilderness model. Active long-term management is required if we are to avoid catastrophic fire impacts and adjustment to climate change.
- Five-yearly RFA reviews need to address the complete forest estate, not just the productive estate. Better information on what is in National Parks is required to be able to appropriately judge what needs to be protected in the NSW State Forest estate.
» It is essential that the five-yearly reviews are done on time. The delay in these reviews has led to many of the present problems the industry is facing. The data from reviews let people know the present state of the industry and the overall production and conservation estate. Without this accurate information there is a lot of conjecture clouding the public debate.

» If a reporting delay cannot be avoided it should be made very clear that this is not grounds for invalidating the RFA.

» Overall from industry’s perspective the RFA framework is very sound and they are delivering well on their defined environmental outcomes. The concerns are primarily about:
  > Implementation not the RFA model itself;
  > Proper monitoring;
  > Genuine attention to the full range of social and economic values, not just environmental values;
  > Better mapping and reflecting the role of plantations in the overall estate. Presently many areas that were planted expressly for timber production forest are now being claimed as old growth forests; and
  > Broader markets such as biomass, wood fiber, chemical extraction and carbon sequestration should also be referenced.

» Future RFAs need to recognize new wood products and factor in climate change.

» Are there opportunities for some areas of National Parks to be working forests if this could assist with active management?

» More communications work needs to be done by Government and the industry to address community misconceptions such as:
  > Only 10-15% of our public forest is protected; and
  > We clear-fell old growth and rainforest.

» There is strong support to move to a rolling RFA review process to remove sovereign risk and not inhibit major new product and production investment.

» Forestry is a very important regional employer and we need to protect both direct and indirect jobs.

9.3 Environmental session feedback

» The role of the Environmental Defenders Office NSW (EDO) is law reform and advice and it was noted that many of its clients had boycotted the RFA engagement process.

» At 25-years-old, the National Forest Policy Statement is in need of an update to better reflect our international obligations and the latest science.

» The delay in the review process is undesirable, the industry should be open to account. The lack of transparency has created a good deal of suspicion.

» The overlaying of the two engagement processes for the RFAs and the review means that environmental stakeholders who wish to be involved in the consultation about renewing the RFAs are doing this largely in the absence of knowing how the agreements are performing on the ground.

» DPI should release a draft RFA as basis for consultation.
The Aboriginal consultation process needs to include the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) and the Native Title Service Provider (NTSCORP Limited) along with relevant groups and local Aboriginal land councils within the regions.

Need to look at real time data and monitoring systems to support timely five-yearly reviews, and applied to, for example, Environment Protection Licence (EPL) offences.

Presently there are no data or agreed indicators.

Better reporting on the state of the reserve and compliance matters is needed to ensure transparency in decision making, and to understand whether the RFA principles are actually being operationalized and delivered through the IFOA.

The removal of civil enforcement is an ongoing concern. Current legislation does not allow individuals to bring forward breaches. This was removed 20 years ago. Open standing for civil enforcement for the community should be reintroduced to the Forestry Act 2012 and the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

There is a lack of confidence among environmental groups in present compliance and enforcement regimes.

The CAR System needs to look equitably at both the production and conservation estate.

Implications of climate change - the CAR Systems needs to accommodate issues such as resilience of species to adapt to climate change.

It should also look at the full assessment of other values of forests such as water, carbon and tourism.

Clear linkages to Paris Agreement - particularly in relation to mitigation through forest protection, biodiversity and sustainable forestry.

Need to better understand and account for cumulative impacts of forestry on the government estate, land clearing and private land forestry and other activities with regard to:

- Biodiversity
- Functional corridors
- Landscape health
- Catchment health

A new comprehensive regional assessment (CRA) should be required. The RFA noted there would be a Further Assessment of Matters as prepared in Tasmania for RFA renewal.

The review process requires more independence and guarantees around timeliness. The delays being experienced are not best practice and erode confidence in the system. Where issues are found, there needs to be better enforcement or assessment of bilateral agreements.

With these caveats in place there was cautious support for a rolling five-year review with a suggestion that Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) act as an independent performance auditor.
Appendices

A Stakeholder meeting agenda
Stakeholder meeting agenda

Below is the stakeholder meeting agenda that was used for all of the stakeholder meetings.
### RFA Regional Stakeholder Roundtables – Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Time</th>
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| 1. **Welcome**  
  » Purpose of this forum  
  » Introductions | Facilitator | 3 minutes |
| 2. **Background**  
  » The region covered by this agreement  
  » Process for renewing agreements  
  » Non-negotiables  
  » Negotiables | DPI and DAWR | 7 minutes |
| 3. **Discussion**  
  1. The existing RFAs were developed 20 years ago. Many things have changed since they were developed. What have been the key changes since the RFAs were developed? (for example the context and operating environment)  
  2. What are some of the issues particularly relevant to this region that need to be considered as the RFA is being negotiated?  
  3. We are considering a five-year rolling extension mechanism to RFAs subject to outcomes from the previous five-yearly review. What are the benefits and disadvantages of this approach? | All (facilitated discussion) | 45 minutes |
| 4. **What’s next?**  
  » Timeline and steps  
  » Staying involved | DPI | 5 minutes |
| 5. **Thank you and close** | Facilitator |