



Australian Government

Renewing NSW Regional Forest Agreements – Consultation Summary

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Renewing NSW Regional Forest Agreements – Consultation Summary

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More information

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Foreword

The New South Wales and Australian governments are committed to the renewal of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) in NSW and to strike a long-term sustainable balance between economic, social and environmental outcomes for our forests.

During late 2017 and early 2018, the NSW and Australian governments consulted with community and stakeholders on the renewal of the NSW Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs).

This report summarises the stakeholder and community feedback received during the consultation process.

The two governments acknowledge the many contributors to the submission and consultation process for providing feedback that has helped to inform negotiations on the renewal of the NSW RFAs.

For more information on the NSW RFAs renewal process please visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forestry. If you have any questions, please contact forests@industry.nsw.gov.au.

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Introduction

The NSW Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) are 20-year agreements between the NSW and Australian governments setting out the sustainable management of NSW native forests.

There are three RFAs in NSW:

1. Eden signed on 26 August 1999
2. North East signed on 31 March 2000
3. Southern signed on 24 April 2001.

The NSW RFAs seek to balance the economic, social and environmental demands on forests by setting commitments for forest management that deliver:

- certainty of resource access and supply to industry
- ecologically sustainable forest management
- an expanded and permanent forest conservation estate.

The NSW RFAs are implemented through the NSW Forest Management Framework and based on the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management (ESFM). The Framework includes relevant forestry, environmental and heritage legislation, regulations, policies and programs.

Both governments understand the importance of stakeholder input to policy development and the future management of NSW's forests.

The NSW RFA renewal process was run concurrently with a review process, which provided stakeholders with a full picture on how the existing agreements have performed and what can be learned from the experience over the past 20 years.

Both the Australian and NSW governments had committed to the renewal of the NSW RFAs, and were seeking stakeholder feedback and input to inform RFA renewal negotiations.

- The Australian Government made an election commitment in 2013 to extend the RFAs for 20 years with a provision for 5yr extensions based on timely and successful reviews.
- The NSW Government committed to extending the RFAs for 20 years in the 2016 NSW Forestry Industry Roadmap.

Stakeholders had three opportunities to provide feedback on the renewal of the NSW RFAs:

- Comment was invited on the NSW RFAs as part of the combined second and third five-yearly review of the NSW RFAs, which was released on 18 December 2017
- Comment was sought through the regional stakeholder engagement process from 18 December 2017 until 12 March 2018 and included face-to-face consultations
- Submissions were invited through the NSW Governments Have Your Say online forum, via post, or direct email to the forestry@industry.nsw.gov.au

The feedback provided by stakeholders and the recommendations in the *Independent review of the report on progress with the implementation of the New South Wales Regional Forest Agreements for the second and third five-yearly reviews 2004 – 2014* have been considered in the subsequent NSW RFA renewal negotiations.

Scope

The NSW and Australian governments have started work on renewing the three RFAs in NSW, which will include as a minimum:

- renewing the NSW RFAs for a further 20-year term to continue the sustainable management of native forests
- maintaining the existing boundaries of NSW RFA regions
- a commitment to the goals, objectives and implementation of the National Forest Policy Statement
- delivering resource access certainty to NSW's forestry industry, ecologically sustainable forest management and maintaining the Comprehensive Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system.

The NSW and Australian governments sought feedback from key stakeholders and the community on a range of issues to improve the sustainable management of NSW native forests within the RFAs framework and ensure that the NSW RFAs remain effective and credible into the future.

Feedback was invited on a number of key areas, including:

- aligning five-yearly reporting obligations between NSW RFA regions and, ideally, with other national reporting obligations (e.g. Australia's State of the Forest Report)
- updating the agreements by:
 - identifying additional considerations that have emerged since the RFAs were entered into
 - simplifying structure and content
 - removing redundant, completed or duplicated commitments
 - including contemporary references to legislation, regulation, codes of practice or processes
 - including contemporary commitments that reflect current and future policies that align with the National Forest Policy Statement (e.g. climate change)
 - reframing existing commitments to ensure they are durable, to reflect contemporary understandings of sustainable forest management and that are meaningful into the future.
- providing for a five-year rolling extension mechanism subject to outcomes from the previous five-yearly review.

As part of the RFAs renewal process, the NSW and Australian governments also considered feedback provided to the RFA review, which informed which parts of the existing RFAs worked well and which parts could be improved.

The suggestions and feedback have helped improve the NSW RFA framework in the renewal of the agreements.

The consultation approach

The stakeholder and community consultation that sought views on RFA renewal ran from 18 December 2017 until 12 March 2018, and included face-to-face consultations and online submissions.

Key stakeholders including local Councils, forestry industry stakeholders, environmental organisations, Aboriginal community groups, regional natural resource management organisations and the Tourism Industry Council of NSW were invited by email or letter to participate in the face-to-face consultation process or to provide a written submission.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) websites provided information about the NSW RFAs review and renewal processes. Stakeholders were invited to make a written submission through the NSW Governments' Have Your Say online forum, by post or by direct email to the DPI or EPA websites. Information was also available on the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture and Water Resources website.

The consultation process was designed following feedback from peak industry and environmental stakeholders and with the support of a professional independent facilitator, Elton Consulting. This ensured that the engagement process was impartial and appropriate.

A separate strategy was developed to engage with the Aboriginal community, which was developed in consultation with Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

Regional communities were also encouraged to have their say. Community drop-in sessions were advertised in local media, social media and through community and industry contacts.

Print media

Quarter page advertisements were run in regional papers including:

- Lismore - *The Northern Star*, Saturday 27 January
- Coffs Harbour - *The Coffs Coast Advocate*, Saturday 27 January
- Bulahdelah - *Great Lakes Advocate*, Wednesday 24 January
- Eden - *The Eden Magnet*, Thursday 25 January
- Batemans Bay - *The Bay Post*, Friday 26 January
- Tumut - *Tumut and Adelong Times*, Friday 26 January.

There were also 52 different newspaper articles and mentions.

Social media

- Facebook advertising on Monday 5 to Friday 9 March with a reach of 18,500+ and a further reach of 30,000+ in newsfeed presences.
- Nine Facebook story posts by NSW DPI to encourage engagement, with a reach of 5,750+.
- Eight NSW DPI Forestry twitter posts, with a reach of 12,250+. These were re-tweeted by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) with a reach of 13,900+.

Web information

- There were 24 unsolicited media stories and posts on web media.
- DAWR, DPI and EPA websites provided relevant information associated with the review and renewal processes.

Electronic media

- **AM radio** – 14 instances – ABC rural / Sydney networks and regional stations with coverage through related stories.
- **FM radio** – 30 instances – ABC rural / Sydney networks and regional stations with coverage through related stories.
- **TV** coverage through related stories – NBN, WIN, Prime7 – Feb 7th to 16th – estimated 50,000 viewers.

Face-to-face meetings

Twenty-six face-to-face stakeholder meetings were held, including two initial planning meetings (one each with peak industry and peak conservation groups) to inform the development of an appropriate engagement strategy.

Six industry stakeholder events, five¹ environmental stakeholder events, and six community drop-in sessions were held in regional NSW (Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Bulahdelah, Eden, Batemans Bay, Tumut and Sydney), between 6 and 16 February 2018.

A separate Aboriginal stakeholder engagement process was also undertaken, with seven regional forums and community meetings attended.

These face to face meetings were opportunities for interested individuals or organisations in key NSW RFA regions to attend and find out more information about the renewal process, the NSW RFAs and NSW's Forest Management Framework.

Around 300 people attended the stakeholder meetings and drop-in centres.

While comments made at these sessions were recorded, attendees were also encouraged to provide written submissions. Some attendees provided written submissions at drop-in centres, which are also considered in the renewal process and in this report.

¹ The reduced number of environmental group meetings was due to no responses received from environmental stakeholders for the meeting that had been planned at Tumut as detailed in table x

What we heard

The feedback received during stakeholder meetings and community drop-in sessions was recorded in detail and has informed this summary of what we heard; this was considered along with the content of written submissions. Further information on the level of participation in the stakeholder and community sessions, and the number of submissions received is documented in the following sections.

The majority of the written submissions were web-based email campaign letters. These provided commentary on issues that were largely outside of the scope of the renewal processes for the RFAs (as described on page 2). These submissions, although not directly related to the renewal processes, has informed and been considered as part of the wider issues identification, information and commentary that informed decisions regarding the redrafting of the RFAs. A core issue has been that many stakeholders did not distinguish between the tactical forest management issues such as harvesting, from the strategic intent of the NSW RFAs.

Stakeholders also highlighted their frustration and confusion regarding the two websites provided for consultation (EPA and DPI websites) and saw this as a lack of coordination by government. Many believed the consultation process was meaningless as the government had already committed to extending the RFAs.

Many stakeholders did not appreciate the RFAs included all forest areas and focussed only on State forest and on native forest logging. This misunderstanding has meant that the contribution and value of RFA processes in establishing the CAR reserve system has not been widely appreciated.

Many submitters also found the information produced for the RFA consultation processes to be difficult to follow and comprehend.

A key feature of the consultation process has been the breadth of views regarding the issues raised in the consultation process. Stakeholder's opinions ranged from strongly supporting NSW RFAs as a model that provides efficient long-term resource access certainty for the industry, through to strongly opposing the NSW RFAs or native forest harvesting under any circumstances.

The majority of stakeholders felt let down by the NSW RFA processes and believe the RFA objectives have not been achieved. Most submissions requested the RFAs not be renewed.

Aboriginal stakeholders raised issues relating to governments poor track record of following through on commitments made in the original NSW RFAs. These include involving Aboriginal people in all aspects of forest management; policy development and planning; and ensuring that local Aboriginal people undertake pre-harvest culture and heritage assessments.

Submission campaign letters:

The NSW RFAs renewal consultation process was dominated by 5 separate submission campaigns:

- One was an industry campaign, based around the submission from Timber NSW (no.= 46)
- Four were community campaigns.
 - Three of these were web based form letters (CampainNow no=651; Dogooder no.=1252; and form letters to the NSW premier office no.=933). These campaigns were informed by submission guides published on the National Parks Association(NPA) , Nature Conservation Council (NCC) and NSW Greens (Dawn Walker) websites;
 - One was based around the submission of the Great Southern Forest Proposal (no.=16)

The key concerns raised by these community campaigns were:

- Failure of RFAs proven by decline in species and habitat, disruption of ecosystem processes, declines in forestry industry and employment
- Current review is not genuine, favouring industry over public interest
- Lack of consideration for Climate Change
- RFAs have resulted in destruction of native forests while the industry operates at economic losses.
- The Government has failed in their role to regulate and review logging operations.
- Wood supply contracts are unrealistic.

The themes for recommendations made by these community campaigns for the future were:

- Not to renew RFAs and stop native forest logging
- Take note of the declining environmental indicators and use the expiry of the RFAs to transition workers out of the industry
- Recognise the value of forests beyond timber production and investigate alternative ways to use state forests
- Protect public native forests by implementing strategies like NPA's Great Koala National Park and Forests for All Plan; and the Great Southern Forest Proposal.

The key concerns raised by the industry campaign were:

- Lack of commitment and poor resourcing at the state and commonwealth levels is the primary reason why the Parties have performed poorly in the delivery of some of their key monitoring and reporting commitments
- Forest monitoring only occurs on State forest should be extended to national parks and reserves, there is a need for better monitoring and benchmarking of forest management to objectively report on the impact of forestry.
- The timber industry seeks greater confidence in timber resource modelling.
- Vast tracts of land have been removed or quarantined from timber harvesting and reserved on the unsubstantiated premise that they are providing critical habitat for threatened species
- Retain the purpose, duration, and basis of the agreements; five yearly review; ESFM principles and monitoring of sustainability indicators; commitments to Industry and Regional Development, Competition Principles, Research, long term timber supply strategy
- Strong support for rolling extension mechanism, and suggests they be considered for wood supply agreements.
- Supports streamlining of reporting obligations.

The themes for recommendations made by the industry campaign for the future were:

- Make more of the commitments, obligations and milestones legally binding.
- Commitment to improve accountability and performance of public forest landscape management with emphasis on tenure-neutral management of common issues
- Recognise critical role of fire as an ecological management tool and that the current guidelines are too conservative
- Include a commitment to engage more indigenous people in ecological fire management
- Acknowledge further expansion of CAR system is not required as targets have been met and exceeded; and enable boundaries of the CAR reserve system to be flexibly adjusted

Summary of the supportive commentary

In general, most of the supportive commentary regarding the NSW RFAs can be found in the submissions from those associated with forestry and forest based industries. These submissions noted that the NSW RFAs provided:

- long-term certainty for investment and development; and
- a mechanism that provided some security to supply and access to resources.

However, there were a number of criticisms of the current form of agreements and identified a number of issues were the NSW RFAs had not delivered on expectations. These submissions noted that new NSW RFAs should address:

- impacts of climate change to better respond to risks
- more active management to improve biodiversity, reduce risks of major fire events and manage water run-off and water quality
- opportunities arising from the carbon economy
- changes in the industry such as manufactured timbers, wood production for biomass, or chemical extraction
- improved recognition of the importance of forests to the regional economy and domestic timber supply to our timber related industries
- improving the security and surety of access to forests, with the ongoing consideration of the conservation and management of the timber resources
- integrated management of pest plants and animals, and fire risk, across the forest estate and adjacent non-forested land.

A key area for improvement was seen to be the timeliness of reporting and review processes. The delayed and complex reporting processes made it difficult to understand the productive and conservation forest estate in each region. It was noted that without this information, both industry and public confidence in the agreements is being eroded.

It was noted that the new NSW RFAs should provide greater guidance on how the social, economic and environmental values are balanced and considered in decision-making. Concern was expressed that the area available for harvesting is dwindling, with more areas identified for forestry being tied up for conservation uses. Stakeholders felt that while this may have environmental advantages, important social and economic considerations were being overlooked.

It was also observed that:

- the social, economic and environmental values are not necessarily competing values
- in well-managed forests in the NSW RFA regions all three of these values do coexist
- the conservation estate is not being effectively managed and is not being held to a similar level of account as the production estate
- there is a general lack of understanding within the community about forestry, for instance native forest logging is not land clearing.

Industry also supported the rolling five-year renewal process.

Summary of the negative commentary

A number of submissions and some individual stakeholder feedback did not support the NSW RFAs, based on a position that all harvesting of native forests should be stopped.

The majority of the submissions to the renewal process were email campaign letters. In general, these form letters contained statements on issues including:

- stop native logging
- value of the forests other than for timber production
- establish conservation parks (eg a Great Koala Park)
- comments on the ineffectiveness of the RFAs and the confusing nature of the Review and Renewal consultation process

Much of the commentary from these submissions was on issues that were largely outside of the scope of the renewal processes for the RFAs (as described on page 2).

One of the many concerns was the pressure on habitat for fauna and flora arising from forestry, but also agriculture, land clearing and urban expansion. Comments included that forests are:

- significant places of refuge and habitat for fauna and flora
- corridors to enable migration of species to new areas
- valuable carbon sinks, sources of clean water and air.

The unintended impacts of forest harvesting activities were also a concern particularly the:

- impact on animals and birds
- increased sedimentation in water courses, soil erosion and soil compaction
- the use of fire and forest residues in harvested areas
- loss of aesthetic / scenic values and impacts on tourism.

Environmental groups and individuals also noted the failure to report on the NSW RFAs in a timely manner. It was felt that the absence of current data and the complexity of reporting make it difficult for the community to understand the impacts the industry is having at a regional and state level.

It was noted that compliance and enforcement is under-resourced and is not a disincentive to poor harvesting practices. This, combined with the inability to bring civil enforcement, adds to a lack of confidence in the ability to regulate the industry and hold it to account.

Aboriginal stakeholder commentary

Aboriginal stakeholders strongly communicated that forests are their home, their Country. They are a place to live, to gather food, to practice culture and pass that on to the next generation. Aboriginal people have a cultural right to access forests and protect them – their cultural responsibility for their Country does not diminish because of a State forest label.

The general views from Aboriginal stakeholders were that NSW RFAs have not fully delivered on the commitments relevant to Aboriginal interests and that the framework can be improved, primarily by addressing how forest management agencies resource and prioritise working with Aboriginal people on an ongoing basis.

Key themes of feedback from Aboriginal stakeholders were that:

- improve the way we work with Aboriginal people
- enhance the recognition of the value of Aboriginal cultural heritage
- ensure improved access and use of forests
- recognition of the role of Aboriginal people in the use of fire and forest management
- recognition of the land management practices and ESFM are not dissimilar
- encourage opportunity for business development and employment

There were also strong views that Aboriginal people have been practicing ESFM for thousands of years and government agencies and programs could learn a lot from Aboriginal forest management. Aboriginal people have in many instances been excluded from co-managing forests and contributing their extensive knowledge on matters such as biodiversity and fire management, as well as cultural heritage.

Key themes

The feedback provided from submissions can be categorised into six themes:

1. NSW RFAs process and future
2. research considerations
3. environmental and cultural values
4. climate change, carbon, water and soil
5. communication and engagement
6. forest practices and policy implementation.

Comments from the submissions related to these themes are detailed later in this document.

Who did we hear from?

A total of 3,215 written submissions were received for the renewal process (Table 1).

Of the 3,215 submissions, 314 were unique, independent submissions. This includes 197 to DPI regarding the renewal consultation, which includes the 4 proforma submission templates. Also included were 117 submissions referred from the NSW RFAs review process conducted by the EPA. The 4 proforma submission campaigns for the renewal consultation resulted in 2874 submissions; in addition were 27 submissions that were variations of these proforma templates.

The majority of submissions were from individuals; with submissions also received from a range of industry associations, environmental non-government organisations, community groups, a local council and Members of Parliament.

A list of submission respondents is provided (Attachment B). However, where the submission cover page lacked detail or was not completed, the submission content was considered but was treated as 'in confidence' and not for publication.

Several stakeholder organisations met with government officials in the development of the consultation strategy and during the process. The key outcomes of these meetings have been treated as a submission from that organisation and the issues raised are discussed in the summary of issues.

A targeted Aboriginal community engagement process was also undertaken. Staff from the NSW DPI and Department of Aboriginal Affairs attended Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) regional forums in Ulladulla, Batemans Bay, Bathurst, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Grafton, during December 2017 to March 2018. This consultation is detailed further in Attachment A.

Table 1 : Summary of submissions received during the NSW RFAs renewal consultation 2018.

SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED				
	Independent submissions	Campaign submissions ²	Campaign submissions - variations	Total
Email	77	1938	27	2042
Online form	118	3	0	121
Post	2	0	0	2
Referred from RFA review	117	0	0	117
Email campaign to Premiers' office	0	933	0	933
Total	314	2874	27	3215

² Details in table 3

For the 197 RFAs email renewal submissions, and where stakeholders could be identified, there was an even balance of submissions from environmental or industry stakeholder groups. Community was defined as those who were representing a community, i.e.: regional or local councils and political groups.

Table 2: Break down of RFAs email renewal submissions by stakeholder groups

Stakeholder	Number of submissions
environmental	28
community	8
industry	28
Not identified	133
Total	197

From the 197 submissions, about half gave permission to publish their submissions.

Most of the proforma submissions came from web based email campaign sources. There were four from environmental sources and one from the forest industry source supporting its representative body. The campaign letter to the premier's office email was seen as one of the proforma submission campaigns.

Table 3: Campaign source for proforma submissions for the NSW RFAs renewal consultation.

Source	Web based, Industry or Environmental	Number
Do-gooder.com	Web based	1252
Campaignnow.com	Web based	651
Timber NSW	Industry	46
Great Southern Forest Proposal	environmental	16
Email campaign to Premier's office	Web based	933

Online submission feedback

A total of 153 online submissions were received. Following the removal of duplications and proforma submissions, there were 121 unique submissions.

For the purposes of reporting, and where identification was possible, the submissions have been characterised as being from a community interest group; or an environmental group; or an industry stakeholder. Otherwise the submissions were treated as a response from the general public.

The submissions responded to the questions as follows:

Q1: How effective do you think the NSW RFAs have been?

Response	General public	Community group	Environmental group	Industry	TOTAL
Not effective	53	3	2	-	58
Partially effective	8	1	-	11	20
effective	-	1	-	1	2
Very effective	2	1	-	2	5
Don't know	3	1	-	-	4
No response	31	-	1	-	32
	97	7	3	14	121

Q2: How important is simplifying the NSW RFAs and removing redundant or duplicated commitment?

Response	General public	Community group	Environmental group	Industry	TOTAL
Very Important	11	1	-	3	15
Important	10	1	1	9	21
Not very important	4	-	1	-	5
Not important	9	1	-	-	10
Don't know	10	1	-	1	12
No response	53	3	1	1	58
	97	7	3	14	121

Q3: How important is maintaining a strong focus on triple bottom line outcomes?

Response	General public	Community group	Environmental group	Industry	TOTAL
Very Important	41	4	2	10	57
Important	4	1	-	3	8
Not very important	-	-	-	-	0
Not important	1	-	-	-	1
Don't know	1	-	-	-	1
No response	50	2	1	1	54
	97	7	3	14	121

Q4: How important is updating references to legislation, codes of practice or new regulation?

Response	General public	Community group	Environmental group	Industry	TOTAL
Very Important	19	1	2	4	26
Important	16	2	-	7	25
Not very important	2	-	-	1	3
Not important	3	-	-	-	3
Don't know	5	1	-	-	6
No response	52	3	1	2	58
	97	7	3	14	121

Q5: How important is alignment with contemporary policies and programs?

Response	General public	Community group	Environmental group	Industry	TOTAL
Very Important	14	1	1	3	19
Important	12	2	-	8	22
Not very important	3	-	1	1	5
Not important	7	-	-	-	7
Don't know	7	1	-	1	9
No response	54	3	1	1	59
	97	7	3	14	121

Q6: How important is alignment with the National Forest Policy Statement and global agreements on sustainable forestry

Response	General public	Community group	Environmental group	Industry	TOTAL
Very Important	23	1	1	8	33
Important	11	2	1	3	17
Not very important	1	-	-	1	2
Not important	3	-	-	-	3
Don't know	6	1	-	-	7
No response	53	3	1	2	59
	97	7	3	14	121

Q7: How important is improving review and reporting requirements?

Response	General public	Community group	Environmental group	Industry	TOTAL
Very Important	31	2	2	8	43
Important	11	-	-	3	14
Not very important	-	1	-	2	3
Not important	-	-	-	-	0
Don't know	4	1	-	-	5
No response	51	3	1	1	56
	97	7	3	14	121

Summary of key issues raised from the online form submissions

The 'on-line form' allowed for the submitter to add 'free text' comments on the issues that were top of mind regarding NSW RFAs, these are summarised below in table 4.

Table 4: Key issues raised in 'on line form' submissions to the NSW RFAs renewal process.

Negative	Positive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop native forest harvesting no. = 35 Focus on climate change no.= 26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support RFAs no.= 37 Improves supply surety no.= 31 Focus on the timber industry value to the community no.= 33
Common themes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase resources for the regulation / monitoring / evaluation / reporting no.= 63 Improve communications / transparency / engagement / reporting frequency no.= 60 Need for recognising the value of forests for Carbon / water / soils / ecosystem / tourism / climate no.= 57 	

From the online form submission there were 146 comments asking for the RFAs not to be renewed, however the Australian and NSW governments had both committed to renew the RFAs and the consultation was requesting input on how the RFA would renewed..

Key themes

The key themes raised from the email submissions, stakeholder meetings and the consultation information ‘drop-in’ centres are summarised below.

1. RFA process and future

Responses

- Many submissions stated that the NSW RFAs should not be extended in its present form. Some felt that the RFAs should be substantively renegotiated or “given a complete overhaul”. Again, this fell outside the scope of the consultation.
- Many submissions also stated that the engagement process was complicated, complex or confusing.
- Support continuation of the RFA framework as a policy framework for ongoing improvement of the management of forests across all tenures and resource security
- Support for the RFA process, although complex, for the agreements to achieve their objectives.
- For future RFAs, the critical issue for the processing sector is the reliable supply of high quality resources from both public and private forests to ensure investor confidence and processing innovation.
- Support for original concepts and objectives of the RFA
- Support the extension concept, the renewal of RFAs on a 20-year rolling basis.
- The RFAs are the right mechanism to balance the competing demands on NSW’s forests into the future.
- Any RFA extension needs to provide longer-term certainty while maintaining a framework for continuous improvement in forest management (conservation and production forests) based on science.
- Governments need to provide additional information about the RFAs extension process and the opportunity for input by interested parties.
- The extension of RFAs should be restricted in scope with fewer commitments and milestones; focused at a high strategic level given the many one off (structural) and system improvement changes required in this RFA have been completed; and the cost and effort of reporting on the very large number of commitments in the current RFAs has been significant.
- An independent statutory body should review the renewal of the RFAs.
- RFAs should be converted to a perpetual, rolling 20-year agreement to provide investment confidence for industry.
- Agreement is needed on the timetable for next Sustainable Yield Review, State of the Forests Report and Implementation Report (as part of any extension agreement).
- Need a new or different RFA following a new comprehensive regional assessment that allows for the inclusion of all stakeholders in a transparent development process.
- The potential impacts of climate change and natural disturbance should be accounted for in revised NSW forest management framework.
- There should be more regular community consultation and engagement around RFA outcomes.
- RFAs should be more focused on measuring outcomes as opposed to compliance.
- Forests should be recognised as carbon sinks and as a potential source of income via carbon credit trading that could outweigh any timber value as well as for other ecosystem services particularly water and biodiversity.

- Future RFAs must achieve a triple bottom line balance with binding commitments on the parties that are not subject to arbitrary alteration.
- Undertake a new social and economic analysis to support the development of the RFA renewal/extension.
- The Aboriginal community would encourage both Governments not to walk away from commitments made in the previous RFAs. There is a lot of hurt over commitments not being delivered.
- The economic benefit of forests to the Aboriginal community is really important and needs to be addressed. Aboriginal people need access to forests for economic benefits.
- Aboriginal people should be given royalties from the use of public forests.
- Funding opportunities for the management of Aboriginal land for environmental outcomes should be pursued through the RFA renewal process.
- Australia supported the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and governments should honour the intent of the declaration.

2. Research considerations

Responses

- Many submissions commented on the need for improved monitoring of the forests to help in determining the effect of activity / conservation on the forest ecology.
- Socio-economic research was identified as a key area for future work including:
 - better assessment of the social impacts of forestry
 - undertaking a comprehensive financial analysis of NSW forestry
 - better socio-economic data to underpin decision making (both at the RFA level and at the forest level to help make triple bottom line assessments);
 - regular assessments of the contribution of various industry sectors to the Gross State Product.
- Several submissions stated that more work was needed to investigate the opportunity for new forest products and applications such as cross-laminated timbers and bio-fuels, and, that the RFAs need to provide the flexibility to allow new markets and products to develop and expand.
- Several respondents expressed the view that while the RFAs had helped commercial forestry, it had done very little for other users of State forests including eco-tourism operators and beekeepers.
- Forest research and development capacity has declined significantly in the past decade, which, needs to be addressed.
- Research priorities have changed over time – need to include climate / carbon / water etc
- A research program should be undertaken to address gaps in the monitoring of RFAs and expand research and development in value adding.
- Need to enhance and increase information for school education programs providing a balanced perspective on forests and forest management across all tenures.
- Support for ongoing R&D for productivity improvements in regrowth stands and processing of plantation grown wood.
- The quality of data to support many of the sustainability indicators and the Montréal process and criteria is deficient.

3. Environmental and cultural values

Responses

- Environmental issues were a key theme in most submissions including:
 - natural and cultural values (including threatened species, biodiversity, indigenous heritage, landscape management, and ecological sustainability)
 - the CAR reserve system, water quality and riparian values.
- Climate change was also raised (this issue has been separately addressed in Theme 4).
- In regard to the management of biodiversity, views ranged from a lack of protection for species/habitats under RFAs, to the opposite view that RFAs already valued the protection of species/habitats higher than social and economic considerations.
- Some submissions called for an expansion of the CAR reserve system, while others believed that NSW's reserve system was already extensive.
- Some industry submissions stated that the CAR reserve system had excluded them from previously accessible areas of sustainably managed forests and they did not want further expansion of reserves.
- Several respondents also recommended an expanded role for the Aboriginal community in forest management.
- Many respondents provided specific comments on threatened species management in NSW's Forest Management Framework.
- Aboriginal culture includes sites, places, animals and plants, thoroughfares, cultural totem systems, and it changes over time.
- There were concerns from the Aboriginal community that Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments before harvesting operations commence were not always undertaken appropriately.
- The Aboriginal community has strong connection to the land and forests; their skills, insights and knowledge should not be forgotten or dismissed in regards to the practice of ESFM.
- Threatened species prescriptions lack targets and are not adequately monitored to determine if the prescriptions met their intended outcomes.
- NSW policies and legislation governing forestry activities do not achieve equivalent standards of protection to those under the EPBC Act.
- New research information is not being translated into management practices to protect biodiversity and threatened species.
- It should be illegal for harvesting practices to destroy habitat of threatened species and communities and these habitats should be protected in perpetuity.
- The Aboriginal community should have a greater role in the stewardship of state forest and reserved areas (hand over ownership or co-management) along with resources and training.
- Aboriginal people should be employed in all forest management agencies, including in key areas and management positions, over and above employment targets.
- The substantive intent of the RFAs in regard to the protection of Aboriginal heritage values has not been met.
- The Aboriginal community seeks more formal engagement in the management plans for parks and reserves and supports Government policy of dual locality names; Aboriginal business and tourist ventures; and joint land management.
- There needs to be greater diligence in ensuring Aboriginal culture and heritage is assessed, recognised and protected when developing harvest plans and during operations. Groups suggested measures should include pre-harvest walk throughs undertaken by trusted, local Aboriginal people with knowledge of cultural sites and places.

- There needs to be a greater respect of the connection of Aboriginal culture and heritage to sites, places and objects.
- There needs to be better cognition and inclusion of the range of skills and techniques relating to cultural fire management.
- Bushfire risk management activities need to apply a different approaches to reduce risks to cultural sites and places, such as mosaic burns or hand clearing near scar trees.

4. Climate change, carbon, water & soils

Responses

- Many respondents thought the RFAs should specifically address and acknowledge the issue of climate change including:
 - an investigation of carbon accounting mechanisms
 - acknowledging the impacts of climate change in forest management (eg altered growth rates of trees, increased fire risk, species composition/population changes, etc)
 - auditing the carbon footprint of forestry activities in State forests
 - Investigating the revenue potential of trading in carbon credits.
- Many respondents tied the discussion of climate change to increased flood / drought / fire events and its effects on water and soil quality.
- Native forest logging is a net source of carbon emissions and if carbon was saleable above particular dollar values, forest carbon sequestration would generate a greater economic return than timber harvesting and processing.
- Further steps are needed to implement measures to protect soils and water quality – quantity, particularly protection of catchment headwaters and limitations on steep country logging.
- There is potential for long-term decline in forest carbon sink capacity due to climate change.
- Forestry fire management is inadequate, as many plantations lack adequate or maintained firebreaks.
- Better bushfire management strategies required particularly for reserved forest.
- Impact of fuel reduction burning on public and private land should be assessed under the national environmental laws applicable to logging operations.
- Declining revenue from forestry compromises the firefighting capability and forest access for firefighting, tourism and other industries and management and infrastructure costs will increasingly fall to the State.

5. Communication and engagement

Responses

- There was a general view that the NSW RFAs are static documents that need to be “modernised” and become more flexible.
- Some specific recommendations were raised including:
 - Consolidating the NSW RFAs into a single document
 - Providing a modern vision statement at the front of the RFAs
 - Implementing a “resourced and prioritised monitoring, evaluation, reporting, research and development plan”.
- Many respondents felt that communication about RFAs could be improved. However, there were differing opinions as to what the key messages should be and how they should be communicated.
- Forest management agencies need to engage with Aboriginal people on an ongoing basis, including in the design of policies and plans, and the management of all forests.
- There was general agreement that the NSW community did not have a good understanding of the NSW RFAs, and that more information was needed to inform public debate.
- Many respondents identified what they perceived as a lack of public consultation processes or public participation. This was raised in regard to the NSW RFAs and the forest management framework.
- There was discussion about the periodic publication of a sustainable timber yield.
- There was a desire to increase reliance on plantation-sourced timber – although there were polarised views.
- Most RFA commitments met with the resultant continuous improvement of forest management in NSW.
- Support the continuation of the NSW RFAs as an effective forest management system with dual NSW and Commonwealth Government support.
- Support the continuation of the NSW RFAs and continued expansion of plantations
- NSW RFAs have focused on environmental outcomes with insufficient attention to social and economic factors that, with loss of forestry activity (and lack of replacement with other economic activity) this has led to a decline in local economies.
- The NSW RFAs have not protected forest environmental values or delivered a sustainable industry.
- There are not enough monitoring, compliance and enforcement mechanisms in place to determine if the NSW RFAs are achieving the desired outcome or to take action where outcomes are not delivered.
- The NSW RFAs do not adequately deal with potential impacts of climate change on forest carbon stocks, sustained yield, natural disturbance or invasive pests.
- There needs to be more regular community consultation and engagement around RFA outcomes.
- Original RFA objective to balance triple bottom line objectives not achieved with environmental considerations taking primacy.

- Employment in forestry has declined over the last three decades but particularly since 2008 and is now a small contributor to the NSW
- Sustainable yield should be independently assessed prior to setting legislated volumes and audited after major wild fire events.
- The minimum saw log quota / wood supply guarantee system should be abolished.
- Plantation forestry should be restricted to non-contentious locations and agricultural land should be protected from plantation development, inappropriately sited or non-commercial plantations should be rehabilitated to native forest or farmland.
- Plantations should be promoted – to preserve native forests
- Plantation resource does not necessarily provide a direct substitute for native forest timber even if the former has been intensively managed
- A review of plantation forests is needed (with potential reconversion to native forest in some areas).
- Government should establish policy to support investment in fit for purpose plantation saw log products, value adding and innovation.
- Native forest logging not financially viable and wood from plantations will supplant supplies from native forest particularly if higher proportion of biomass could be utilized, higher prices charged for logs and a carbon price incorporated into forest planning decisions.
- Better promotion of the positive aspects of native forest logging by the government and industry in NSW RFA regions

6. Forest practices and policy implementation

Responses

- Although this was not the focus of the RFA renewal consultation process, many submissions contained information and commentary around the implantation of the NSW Forest Management Framework.
- Many submissions raised issues around harvesting operations and forestry practices in general, in particular was the reference to Forestry Corporation NSW FC NSW.
- Some submissions suggested amendments be made to the NSW Forest Management Framework ranging from tighter controls to less restrictive controls. Many submissions recommended that the RFAs include a commitment to cease all broad-scale clearing and native forest harvesting.
- The NSW Forest Management Framework exceeds the requirements of international forest certification schemes.
- Introduce independent review and oversight of logging plans and activity of FC NSW.
- Ensure public accountability of FC NSW in the decisions it makes, particularly about the approval of harvest plans.
- Tackle FC NSW shortcomings including:
 - consideration, protection and conservation of ecological values
 - adhering to and complying with the range of regulations about threatened species and threatened fauna habitat
 - more consideration of impacts and potential impacts on adjoining properties when approving logging plans
 - ensuring 'good neighbour' approach to managing pest plants and animals
 - appropriate cultural heritage assessments during the pre-harvest planning phase
 - more consideration of the potential impacts on currently non-threatened flora and fauna
 - schedule harvesting so as not to impact other forest based industries, such as honey production
 - pre-harvest cultural heritage assessments should always be undertaken by trusted, local Aboriginal people with knowledge of cultural sites and places.
- Improve poor forest practices in ecological terms that appear to be entrenched in the industry such as:
 - clear-felling of native forests
 - non-retention and induced loss of habitat trees
 - inappropriate regeneration burns
 - wasteful practices within logging coupes
 - ensure forest regeneration matches diversity pre-harvest and does not result in mono-cultures.
- Improve the accuracy of the data (specifically the mapping of vegetation and the area of native forest) within the State of the Forests NSW
- Provide evidence of improvements to the independence of and transparency of compliance monitoring of forestry operations
- FC NSW should be reformed – the outputs of management tools supporting the FPC should be made mandatory; full implementation of landscape scale planning, third party appeal rights and improved capacity for adoption of new knowledge

- Almost half the State's native forests are excluded from timber harvesting, a figure that exceeds or meets international benchmarks.
- The definition of high conservation forest is contestable and most (depending on the definition) is already reserved.
- The level of reservation is creeping well above that intended in the RFAs to achieve environmental, economic and social balance.
- Commitments to reserve management should be completed and there should be adequate resourcing for reserve management.
- Expand reservation of public forest
- Prohibit mining, shooting of wildlife and selective logging in reserves.
- Convert informal RFA reserves to formal reserves.
- Provide a definition in line with JANIS criteria.
- Introduce a mechanism to allow land swaps between reserves and non-reserved forest to maintain the balance.
- Reform all State legislation where forestry is helped/exempted/favoured and introduce third party appeal rights.
- Reduce harvesting in native forests by ending export wood chipping and prevent subsidised use of native forest residues for energy generation.
- Disallow the burning of native forest waste for energy.
- Abolish or restructure FC NSW to ensure an economic return to NSW.
- Update NSW's forestry policy
- Update and revise the NFPS
- Introduce more stringent controls for log trucks and road usage to ensure safety and minimise road damage
- FC NSW should pay rates for infrastructure maintenance
- FC NSW are under-resourced and should employ more staff to work with the community.
- FC NSW should employ more Aboriginal people, especially with respect to working with the Aboriginal community to cover the large area and many different groups covering the land they manage.

Attachment A: consultation meetings

Representatives from industry, local government and environmental groups were invited to attend consultation sessions. In total over 252 stakeholders and interested community members attended the consultation sessions, as detailed in Table 5. The sessions were promoted through the DPI website, social media channels, and local media. The 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.

Table 5: Details of stakeholder meetings and community drop-in sessions as part of the NSW RFAs renewal process consultation.

Where	Who ³	When	Attendees (approx.)
Sydney (scoping)	Peak industry stakeholders	12 December 2017	10
	Peak environment stakeholders		4
Lismore	Industry ² stakeholders	6 February 2018	3
	Environment stakeholders		10
	General public		20+
Coffs Harbour	Industry stakeholders	7 February 2018	14
	Environment stakeholders		3
	General public		20+
Bulahdelah	General public	8 February 2018	31
Eden	Industry stakeholders	13 February 2018	5
	Environment stakeholders		12
	General public		50+
Batemans Bay	Industry stakeholders	14 February 2018	3 (local government only)
	Environment stakeholders		4
	General public		35+
Tumut	Industry stakeholders	15 February 2018	3
	Environment stakeholders		0 ⁴
	General public		8
Sydney	Industry stakeholders	16 February 2018	14
	Environment stakeholders		3 (EDO reps only)
Total	-	-	252+

³ Table note: (1) Stakeholder sessions were by invite only; general public sessions were open to all (2) 'Industry' stakeholders include forest related industries and peak bodies, MPs, Local Government, Chamber of Commerce etc.

⁴ No responses were received for this meeting

Consultation with Aboriginal communities:

Key Aboriginal groups including the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC), registered owners under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, Native Title holders and NTSCORP⁵ Ltd were invited by letter or email to attend the consultation sessions.

In total approximately 105 people attended the seven consultation sessions with Aboriginal stakeholder groups, as detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of consultation sessions with Aboriginal stakeholder groups as part of the NSW RFAs renewal process.

Who	When	Where	Attendees (approx.)
South Coast Regional Forum	16 November 2017	Ulladulla	25
Mid North Coast Regional Forum	6 December 2017	Port Macquarie	10
NTSCORP	25 January 2018	Sydney	2
South Coast Regional Forum	22 February 2018	Batemans Bay	25
Wiradjuri Regional Forum	26 February 2018	Bathurst	15
Three way meeting with Mid North Coast, North Coast and Northern Regional Forums	28 February 2018	Coffs Harbour	20
Small Aboriginal groups in the Grafton area including: Jagun Elders, Garby Elders, Ngerrie LALC, Yaarringay	14 March 2018	Grafton	8
Total	-	-	105

⁵ Native Title Service Provider for Aboriginal Traditional Owners in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

Attachment B: Submissions

Note: this list doesn't include the 50 submissions that were received that asked to be anonymous but were able to be published.

Table 7: Names and organisations of those who made submissions to the NSW RFAs renewal process who provided permissions for their details to be published.

Number	Source	First Name	Last name	Name of organisation
1.	online form	Aiden	Mifsud	
2.	online form	Alison	Alison Sexton-Green	Friends Of The Mongarlowe River
3.	online form	Alison	Alison Sexton-Green	
4.	online form	Alison	Hill	
5.	online form	Andrea	Millsom	
6.	email	Andrew	Jeeves	Wonboyn Lake Management Group
7.	email	Andrew	Picone	Australian Conservation Foundation
8.	online form	Andrew	Hurford	Hurford Hardwood Pty Ltd
9.	email	Ann	Sharp	
10.	online form	Anthony	Dorney	SA Relf & Sons Pty Ltd
11.	email	Bob	Harris	
12.	email	Bronte	Somerset	
13.	email	Carole	Kayrooz	
14.	online form	Carrie	Davis	
15.	online form	Cassandra	Hooper	
16.	online form	Catherine	Turville	
17.	email	Cathy	Merchant	Ryde Hunters Hill Flora And Fauna Preservation Society
18.	online form	Charles	Stockton	
19.	email	Christina	Kirsch	Clearsky Solar Investments
20.	email	Dailan	Pugh	
21.	email	David	Macdonald	

Number	Source	First Name	Last name	Name Of Organisation
22.	online form	Dawn	Walker	Greens NSW
23.	online form	Dida	Brenner	
24.	email	Don	White	
25.	email	Edward	Hills	
26.	online form	Frances	Perkins	National Trust (Nsw) Far South Coast Branch
27.	email	Frank	Dennis	
28.	email	Geoffrey	Sharpe	BUGS Eurobodalla Cycling Club
29.	email	Geoffrey	Robin	
30.	online form	Graham	Holland	Lane Cove Bushland And Conservation Society
31.	email	Harriet	Swift	Stopchip And South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA)
32.	email	Heather	Irwin	
33.	email	Ian	Donavan	National Parks Association Nsw, Hunter Branch
34.	email	Ian	Johnson	Cumberland Bird Observers Club Inc
35.	online form	Jane	Paul	NSW Bird Atlassers
36.	email	Jane	Scott	
37.	online form	Janine	Howe	
38.	online form	Jennifer	Severn	
39.	email	Matthew	Sparkes	
40.	email	Jonathan	Milford	
41.	email	Joslyn	Van Der Moolen	Friends Of The Forest (NSW)
42.	online form	Karen And Darryl	Smith	
43.	email	Keith	Muir	The Colong Foundation For Wilderness Ltd
44.	online form	Kiera	Pershouse	
45.	online form	Kiri	Mitchell	
46.	online form	Lachlan	Reilly	
47.	email	Libby	Hepburn	

Number	Source	First Name	Last name	Name Of Organisation
48.	online form	Lies	Pajmans	
49.	email	Linda	Brannian	Birdlife Northern NSW
50.	email	Lisa	Pfizer	
51.	online form	Lisa	Brown	
52.	email	Lorraine	Vass	
53.	email	Maggie	Camfield	
54.	email	Maree	Mccaskill	Timber NSW
55.	email	Margaret	Mayman	Pitt Street Church
56.	email	Marita	Macrae	
57.	online form	Marius	Heymann	Newell's Creek Sawmilling Co
58.	email	Maureen	Webb	
59.	online form	Megan	Armstrong	
60.	online form	Melisse	Reynolds	
61.	online form	Mike	Mizzi	
62.	email	Nari	Sahukar	Environmental Defenders Office
63.	email	Niel	Bingley	NSW Apiarists Assoc
64.	online form	Nola	Firth	
65.	email	Norm	Webb	
66.	email	Oisin	Sweeney	
67.	email	Pamela	Reeves	Ryde Gladesville Climate Change Action Group
68.	email	Paul	Payten	
69.	email	Paula	Flack	
70.	online form	Rachel	Mitchell	
71.	online form	Rebecca	Stevens	
72.	online form	Richard	Barcham	
73.	email	Robert	Bertram	
74.	email	Robin	Gunning	NPA

Number	Source	First Name	Last name	Name Of Organisation
75.	online form	Rodney	Henson	Henson Sawmilling Pty Ltd
76.	email	Rosie	White	
77.	online form	Sally	Mcadam	
78.	email	Sean	Burke	South East Region Conservation Alliance
79.	online form	Steve	Hensler	
80.	email	Steve	Dobbynys	Jamax Forest Solutions
81.	online form	Stewart	Mckinnell	Mckinnells Pty Ltd
82.	online form	Susie	Russell	North Coast Environment Council
83.	online form	Victor	Violante	Australian Forest Products Association
84.	online form	Victoria	Nelson	
85.	email	Vince	Phillip	