



We are now accepting email submissions. The form below must be filled out and attached in an email and sent to [ifoa.remake@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ifoa.remake@epa.nsw.gov.au) If this form is not attached or incomplete the submission will be lodged as confidential and will not be published.

### **Make a submission – Contact Details**

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**Country\*:** Australia

**Stakeholder type (circle)\*:** Industry Group

**Organisation name:** Australian Forest Products Association

**What is your preferred contact method:** Mobile or email

**Would you like to receive further information and updates on IFOA and forestry matters?** Yes

**Can the EPA make your submission public\* (circle)?** Yes

**Have you previously engaged with the EPA on forestry issues?** Yes

#### **1. What parts of the draft Coastal IFOA are most important to you? Why?**

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) is interested in entire draft Coastal IFOA and considers all parts to be important. As a regulatory instrument IFOAs are a critical determinant of the NSW timber industry's continuing commercial viability and its vital importance to regional economies in NSW. The way and extent to which native timber harvesting operations is regulated has an impact on the amount, type and quality of timber that comes to market and its price. All sectors within the NSW hardwood timber supply chain will in some way be affected by the IFOA remake.

#### **2. What parts of the draft Coastal IFOA do you think have a positive outcome on the management of environmental values or the production of sustainable timber? Why?**

AFPA supports the need for an effective regulatory instrument that maintains forest values in accordance with ecologically sustainable forest management (ESFM) principles (Appendix 1). AFPA also recognises the value of operating rules which are transparent and easy to interpret. The consultation draft is much easier to read and interpret than the existing IFOAs. The new layout is also an improvement allowing detailed information to be more easily found. Splitting the instrument into Conditions and Protocols is supported



as it will enable prescriptive details to be more easily updated. In terms of enforceability there can be no doubt that the draft is water tight comprising almost 250 pages of detailed regulation.

**3. What parts of the draft Coastal IFOA do you think have a negative outcome on the management of environmental values or the production of sustainable timber? Why?**

The consultation draft introduces a raft of new conditions and protocols and additional layers of complexity. Of all the proposed changes the new individual tree retention prescriptions pose the greatest risk to sustainable timber supply, particularly those relating to koala habitat retention. The industry is totally committed to the conservation of the koala and the recent research by Dr Brad Law indicates that the koala numbers are far higher than previously thought. So simple tree retention strategies will not necessarily improve the population of koalas.

AFPA has significant concerns with the EPA's overarching approach which seeks to regulate every minute aspect of the Forestry Corporation's core business. As the designated State forest managers responsible for environmental, public and industry values, they should be accorded the respect of high level stewardship for sustainable operational forests. We note however that the oppressive and often unnecessary regulatory control comes at the expense of operational flexibility and the Forestry Corporation's discretionary powers.

The excessive regulatory control model being proposed by the EPA will not deliver positive ESFM outcomes envisaged because of the lack of acknowledgment that forestry science has equal weighting with environmental science.

**4. What are your views on the effectiveness of the combination of permanent environmental protections at the regional, landscape and operational scales (multi-scale protection)?**

AFPA has consistently advocated for careful consideration of environmental protection at the regional, landscape and operational scale. Before the EPA was involved in the regulation of forest management the then Forestry Commission employed professional foresters who applied the multi-scale protection principle which achieved the same aim. This was undertaken without the need for excessive prescriptive regulation.

The benefit of the less regulated approach was that it gave the organisation flexibility and discretion to optimise the management of all forest values not just those considered important to the EPA whose charter is only focussed on environmental values.

**5. In your opinion, would the draft Coastal IFOA be effective in managing environmental values and a sustainable timber industry? Why?**



The importance of trialling and testing the effect of the proposed IFOA changes cannot be overstated, however this issue appears to have been ignored. In the absence of rigorous testing the industry can have no confidence that timber resources and forest productivity will not be impacted.

The proposal to ensure retained trees in permanently protected clumps is an example of a significant change whose effect has not been tested. The distribution of our native forest trees (in terms of their age, species, condition and structure) is highly unpredictable. Trees with particular environmental values like hollows do not naturally occur in clumps, they are randomly spread across the landscape.

Similarly, the location of individual trees that are preferred browsing by koalas is unpredictable. Trying to clump trees for environmental protection purposes will not work if they are not distributed in this way. Large old trees which have good habitat value typically have no value for commercial timber. Where these and other trees - with special environmental value - occur in isolation it is unclear how they will be treated and how their influence on timber productivity and sustainable supply will be modelled.

The IFOA draft's focus on the identification and recording of trees for 'permanent retention' is of concern to the industry. Forests are dynamic ecosystems which are constantly changing. Trying to manage trees like they are artefacts in a museum is not good science.

The use of new mapping technology is presented as the answer to addressing an additional compliance burden and the growing complexity of environmental protection rules. The recording of the location of individual trees and important environmental features will undoubtedly increase transparency and will hopefully also reduce ambiguity. However, AFPA understands that beneath the forest canopy GPS tracking technology is only accurate to within + or - 5 to 10 metres. With EPA monitoring its conditions to the nearest metre (after the canopy has been removed), this could become a compliance problem.

## 6. General comments

AFPA would like to see the NSW Department of Primary Industry (DPI) play a greater role in the IFOA remake process. It is our understanding that DPI is meant to be taking a lead role in the development of forestry policy being instrumental in the underpinning of the NSW Forestry Industry Roadmap (within which regulatory modernisation is a key component). With significant specialist forestry science resources NSW DPI could have contributed enormously to address the aspects of sustainable timber supply which are of critical concern to the industry

## APPENDIX 1



*principles of ecologically sustainable forest management* means the following:

- (a) maintaining forest values for future and present generations, including:
  - (i) forest biological diversity, and
  - (ii) the productive capacity and sustainability of forest ecosystems, and
  - (iii) the health and vitality of native forest ecosystems, and
  - (iv) soil and water quality, and
  - (v) the contribution of native forests to global geochemical cycles, and
  - (vi) the long term social and economic benefits of native forests, and
  - (vii) natural heritage values,
- (b) ensuring public participation, provision of information, accountability and transparency in relation to the carrying out of forestry operations,
- (c) providing incentives for voluntary compliance, capacity building and adoption of best-practice standards,
- (d) applying best-available knowledge and adaptive management processes to deliver best-practice forest management,
- (e) applying the precautionary principle (as referred to in section 6 (2) (a) of the *Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991*) in preventing environmental harm.