

I am writing to state my opposition to the renewal of the NSW Regional Forest Agreements (RFA's). To use the second and third reviews as a justification for renewing the RFA's for another 20 is completely unacceptable.

The National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS), which is the basis of the RFA, has failed in all its goals, objectives and implementation.

The NFPS has failed to:

- (a) Implement Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM).
- (b) Develop an internationally competitive wood production and wood products industry.

(a) Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM).

None of the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM) have been adhered to under the NFPS.

Principle 1, maintain or increase the full suite of forest values for present and future generations across the NSW native forest estate has failed.

In my discussions with Forestry Corporation NSW (FCNSW), Operation Managers continually refer to State Forests as "Production Forests", where the only value of the forest is in how much timber can be extracted. FCNSW Operations Managers speak of State forests where few trees are allowed to reach an age older than 20 years. FCNSW logging operations within my local State Forest compartments are occurring within 10 to 12 years of the last logging operation, with adjacent compartments being logged within a 6 year period of each other. This breaches Integrated Forestry Operations Approval for Eden Region (IFOA), PART 3, 22. Planning logging operations (2), which states "In planning the location and timing of proposed logging operations under subclause (1), "disperse those operations over the Eden Region and over time, so as to reduce any cumulative impacts of logging operations in any part of the Region". In addition, these types of logging operations fail to "ensure that ESFM at the regional and smaller scales is implemented by ecologically appropriate planning and operational practice" and cannot "ensure the long-term maintenance of the full range of values of the NSW existing forest estate". The intention of the ESFM is to "maintain or increase not only the full range of values, but also the magnitude, or level at which those values are maintained or increased", and it has failed. It is clear that with the current RFA's, timber logging is favoured above all other forest values including "intergenerational equity" due to the rapidly declining age of trees in State Forests, which is a direct consequence of logging operations.

The aims of the ESFM values have failed.

Biological diversity has fallen, with more and more species being listed as vulnerable, or endangered. The Australia State of the Environment 2016 report's key findings state that "A legacy of extensive land clearing and the current clearing policies in some jurisdictions continue to cause loss of biodiversity (including the loss and fragmentation of native vegetation)". The report also states that the main pressures affecting the Australian environment today are "land-use change, habitat fragmentation and degradation". Logging operations in native forests under the RFA's are contributing to habitat loss and fragmentation. The ESFM aim to "Protect landscape values" and "appropriate patches and corridors of vegetation", has failed.

It is clear that the productive capacity and sustainability of forest ecosystems has worsened since the introduction of RFA's and the rate of removal of forest products is not consistent with ecologically sustainable levels. The diminishing availability of larger logs from state forests is evident from the complaints from local and interstate timber mills about the difficulties to source suitably sized logs.

The aim to ensure the deleterious effects of activities/disturbances which threaten forests, forest health or forest values are minimised has failed. Due to the size and weight of the equipment now used in logging operations, massive disturbances are being caused to the soil through compaction and to the root systems of retained trees. FCNSW is repeatedly breaching the Threatened Species License (TSL) prescriptions, where silt and logging debris is allowed to runoff into streams, where heavy equipment damages tree root systems, tree canopies and trunks, including branches with habitat hollows. Rocky outcrops and their exclusion zones are continually being logged in blatant breach of the TSL prescriptions.

The forest ecosystem health and vitality has not been protected by the RFA's. The threats to forest ecosystems from introduced diseases, exotic plants and animals, fire, flooding and wind has increased.

There is an increased fire risk due to logging. During the Victorian 2010 Bushfire Royal Commission into the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, Professor Ross Bradstock, Director of the Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires at the University of Wollongong, spoke at the Commission as an expert witness where he presented a research report by himself and Owen Price that stated the "Probability of crown bushfire increased by logging regrowth." and that "young regrowth from past clear fell logged native forest, increases the crown bushfire risk". Further evidence of the increased risk of bushfire in logged forests was presented by Professor David Lindenmayer from the Australian National University with researchers from Melbourne University, stated that, "the increased fire risk began about seven years after an area had been logged and lasted for another 50 years". And that "the results showed the fires around Kinglake and Marysville were about 25 per cent more severe due to the

clear-felling of forest in the area". Add to this the affects of climate change with more frequent extreme weather events, it is evident that the RFA's oversight of logging in native forests is putting at risk the lives of people and communities living near logged State forests.

Promote good environmental practice in relation to pest management has failed.

There has been extensive research over the years showing there is increased activity of feral animals, particularly foxes, in recently logged areas. A 2016 report "The effects of interaction between planned burning and foxes on the presence of native mammals" by the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning found that "Fox activity in the burn area increased immediately post-burn". The report also found that "The effects of the interaction between predation and the reduction in habitat complexity leads to species decline". A 2015 research article titled "Adoption in Eastern Grey Kangaroos: A Consequence of Misdirected Care?", by Wendy King, a doctoral student at the University of Queensland, studied wild grey kangaroos in a national park in Victoria and found that, "Only about 50% of marked females successfully raised offspring to the large pouch young stage" and that "The main predator was the introduced red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)". Research clearly shows that many native species are at a higher risk of predation by feral animals in recently logged native forests. As a Government registered wildlife rehabilitator, I am concerned that young native mammals I soft release near logged State forests are at an unacceptable increased risk of predation by feral animals. Given the increasing number of native species listed as vulnerable, threatened and endangered, it is obvious that logging operations are indeed contributing to native species decline.

Ensure the deleterious effects of activities/disturbances within forests, their scale and intensity, including their cumulative effects are minimized has failed.

The large heavy machinery used in current logging operations make it impossible to adequately manage the effects of disturbances in logged forests. These detrimental effects are multiplied when adjacent forest compartments are logged within a short period of time.

Restore and maintain the suite of attributes (ecological condition, species composition and structure of native forests) where forest health and vitality have been degraded has failed.

There has been no attempt by FCNSW to "restore and maintain" ecological condition, species composition, or the structure of the logged forests in my locality - the forests have been left to nature to regrow.

Soil and water degradation has increased under the RFA's.

Using heavy machinery for logging operations has unnaturally compacted the soil throughout logged compartments. This has exposed the soils to nutrient loss and erosion. Add too this the clear felling practices employed which remove almost all of the forest canopy, the physical integrity of soil is compromised. FCNSW repeatedly breach TSL prescriptions by allowing runoff into streams, logging in stream exclusion zones and logging in water catchment areas, which has a detrimental effect on water quality, not only in the logged compartments, but down stream as well.

Properly account for the positive contribution forests have on climate as well as air and water quality has failed.

It is well accepted that climate change is real, that it is occurring now and that all nations must act now to avert a catastrophe. Australia has agreed to reduce its omissions and meet international agreed targets. Our forests are important natural carbon sinks, ceasing logging in our native forests will help NSW and our nation meet the challenges of climate change. Old growth forests and older, larger trees in previously logged forests must be retained and effort made to ensure their survival. William Morris from the University of Melbourne has been involved in US Geological Survey research showing that "older trees have been found to grow faster and absorb carbon dioxide more rapidly than younger, smaller trees" Professor David Lindenmayer, professor of environment at the Australian National University, described the findings as "immense, with implications of global significance".

Principle 2, to ensure public participation, access to information, accountability and transparency in the delivery of ESFM has failed.

Intimidation and threats of violence against members of the public who challenge logging operations in their local area, continue to occur. An ABC news report on 14 July 2015, titled "Unidentified men intimidate family and photographer after logging truck protest", demonstrates the extreme actions the logging industry will use to silence complaints by locals.

Principle 3, to ensure legislation, policies, institutional framework, codes, standards and practices related to forest management require and provide incentives for ecologically sustainable management of the native forest estate has failed.

State laws prohibiting citizens from taking legal action against FCNSW has allowed FCNSW to ignore the IFOA and TSL prescriptions. Breaches of IFOA and the TSL prescriptions repeatedly occur which is tantamount to illegal logging in State forests. Responsibility for holding FCNSW to account, including prosecuting for breaches, can only be conducted by the Environment Protection Agency NSW (EPANSW). I have been involved in recent post harvest audits, checking that FCNSW operations are following required operational prescriptions. I have provided data containing detailed information about IFOA and TSL breaches to the EPANSW. I have met with EPANSW forestry

investigators in logged forest compartments and shown them incidents of illegal logging. Unfortunately I have found the investigation and prosecution process slow and ineffective. The same types of breaches are occurring time and time again and when a court judgment is handed down against FCNSW, the fines imposed are not a sufficient deterrent. It can take a number of years for the EPA to investigate and prosecute FCNSW for breaches of the TSL prescriptions in any given forest compartment, all the while FCNSW move on to another forest compartment where they commit further breaches while under investigation. In 2017, I met with FCNSW Operation managers at a recently logged State forest compartment to discuss possible breaches of the TSL. I was informed by an Operations Manager that "The TSL is not to be read literally". Every other industry must comply with Federal environment law. FCNSW are exempted from Federal environment laws and are able to operate as they please with near impunity.

Principle 5, apply best available knowledge and adaptive management processes is not occurring.

State forests are being clear felled and burnt despite recent research showing that habitat loss and fragmentation and increased feral predator activities in cleared forests is contributing to species decline and climate change.

(b) Develop an internationally competitive wood production and wood products industry has not been achieved.

FCNSW native forest division has consistently posted million dollar losses over the last decade. Public money is being wasted propping up an industry that cannot survive without Government intervention. A 2016 discussion paper by the Australia Institute titled, "Money doesn't grow on trees - The financial and economic losses of native forestry in NSW", found that "Native forest logging by FCNSW generated losses of \$79m over the last seven years". It found that FCNSW "has paid a total of \$119m in dividends to the NSW Government in the past 10 years. Over the same period, the NSW Government paid Forestry Corporation a total of \$136m in grants". And "neither the value or volume of product improved, with revenue remaining flat at \$99m". Logging native forests is not financially viable. The timber mills that process material from native forests are struggling to function profitably and will inevitably require Government support. The Eden Chip mill under its new Australian owners, Allied Natural Wood Exports, struggles to be profitable. The financial report for the year ended 30 June 2017, shows a Gross profit of \$1.8m, however this includes the proceeds from an Insurance claim of \$1.5m. The financial report also states that the business "required support from the Government and the local community". Australian Sustainable Hardwoods in Hayfield, Victoria is the latest mill to experience the reality of relying upon unsustainable native timber quotas and had to be "saved" by the Victorian Government which purchased the business. The industry has not been able to secure internationally recognised forest stewardship certification for its native forest logging operations. The industry has had to resort to creating its own standard, that falls too short of what the international community expects of modern logging operations.

Conclusion.

The RFA's have proven to be a failure and have not delivered economically, or environmentally.

The current system of monitoring and oversight of logging operations is inadequate.

The 5 yearly reviews are not being undertaken when they are required.

FCNSW does not adhere to the IFOA and TSL prescriptions.

Native forests are not being maintained appropriately for future generation to enjoy and benefit from.

Native forests are only being treated as wood production forests – nothing else.

The RFA's have not stopped logging operations having a detrimental affect on forest ecosystems.

The RFA's have not stopped native flora and fauna declines or becoming extinct in some areas.

The RFA's have not stopped logging operations contributing to climate change

The RFA's have not stopped logging operations increasing the severity and frequency of bush fires.

The RFA's have not stopped the industry from requiring Government assistance and public money to survive.

The RFA's should not be renewed.