



**NTCA Submission on the Report on Progress with Implementation of the New South Wales Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) Second and Third Five-Yearly Reviews, 2004-2014**

**[North East RFA, Eden RFA, Southern RFA]**

*The National Timber Councils Association is an incorporated local government association representing the interests of member municipal regional councils in relation to forestry on both public and private land. The Association's primary function is to provide a forum for local government to address the management of forests and forest industries and their impact on local communities.*



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The National Timber Councils Association (NTCA) would like to thank the Commonwealth Government and New South Wales State Government for supporting a process that enables organisations such as ours to be heard. Our Association welcomes the submission process and is glad to make a submission.

The NTCA represents councils which host the forest industry from four states, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria, with informal connections to councils across the remainder of Australia.

The National Timber Councils Association aims to promote vibrant, resilient communities, maintain regional investment, employment opportunities and responsible environmental practices.

We acknowledge that the stated purposes of the New South Wales Regional Forest Agreements are:

- To establish a framework for the management of forests in the RFA regions
- Identify areas and regions that the Parties believe are required for the purposes of a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system, and provide for the conservation of those areas
- Provide for the ecologically sustainable management and use of forested areas in the region
- Are for the purpose of providing long-term stability of forests and forest industries

In response to the report on progress with Implementation of New South Wales RFAs period 2 & 3: 2004-2014, we would like to make the following comments:

Security of supply is paramount not only to the forest industries but also for the economic viability of many of the rural communities within the New South Wales RFA regions. As stated in the 2003 Review of Studies of the Socio-Economic Impact of Forest Industries in Australia, "*The forest industries are particularly important to many rural and regional centres, directly employing staff and contractors in forest management, harvesting and haulage, sawmilling and timber processing and downstream manufacturing of wood products.*"<sup>1</sup>

When reading the progress against milestones and commitments it was disappointing to see that the supply arrangements for some regions were only partly met. From 2003-04 to 2012-13 hardwood log supplies have been reduced to accommodate new national parks and conservation reserves.<sup>2</sup> This has resulted in a reduction of a resource available which makes it difficult for timber industries to continue to value add let alone consider accessing new markets with new products.

We not only agree that there needs to be a balance regarding economic, environmental and social outcomes, but also believe that the forestry and timber industry encompasses all these outcomes, it is not an either/or situation. The forest and timber industry is heavily regulated and scrutinised. All legislation that regulates forestry industry promotes the ecologically, sustainable management of Australian forests.

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We have concerns that the timing of the five -yearly reviews are not occurring in a timely manner, so that milestones can be addressed appropriately in the following period and also provide some certainty on when reviews will take place. We recommend that timelines for the five yearly review should ultimately be set at the beginning of each five year period.

In conclusion, the objective to provide long term stability of forest and forest industries is still not being met. In a carbon sensitive world, the forest industry is well situated to prosper and contribute to local, state and national economies, however if long term security of supply cannot be guaranteed industry and communities are placed at risk. As a result, both the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments need to provide policies to support the economic viability and health and wellbeing of small towns.

References:

1. Australian Government, Forest and Wood Products Development Corporation- *Review of Studies of the Socio-Economic Impact of Forest Industries in Australia*, 2003. Pg 4-1
2. Australian Government, Department of Agriculture, *ABARES-Australian Forest and Wood Products Statistics*, Nov 2013

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