

19 February 2019

The Hon. Gabrielle Upton MP

Minister for the Environment, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Heritage

GPO Box 5341

SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Minister Upton,

I write to you not so much with regards the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs), but about the process by which public feedback was sought.

With respect, the obvious anomaly of the whole situation is that the Federal and State Governments had agreed to extend NSW's RFAs and only then sought public feedback. To seek public feedback on something which the public owns is of course, appropriate. It is unjust to make a decision about the future of the public's property before asking for feedback.

These are our forests and the way they are being treated is opposed by 85% of the respondents to the public feedback process and, to my knowledge, this has not swayed governments' opinions that their predetermined decision was against public will and should be revoked.

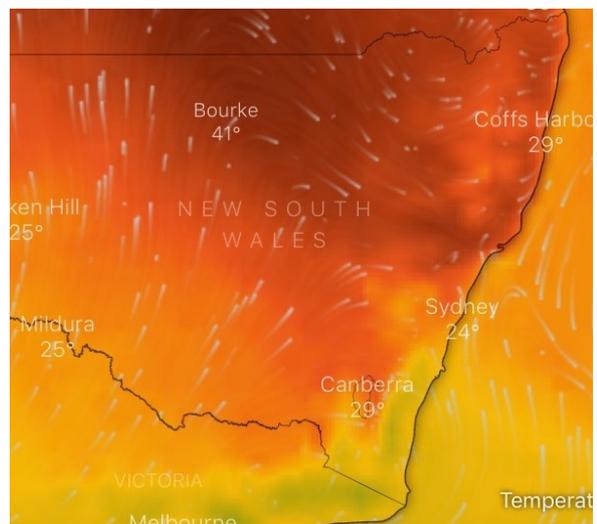
I thoroughly reviewed and reported on the feedback process. My paper: *Questioning the Application of Procedural Justice Principles within the NSW Government's RFA Public Submission Process* is attached. It reviews the feedback process and considers whether the principles of procedural justice: voice, transparency, fairness, accessibility and impartiality, were evident. It demonstrates that people who wanted to 'have a say' would be challenged trying to evaluate the huge amount of accompanying documentation. Feedback from friends and colleagues indicated confusion and lack of comprehension; thus disempowerment. Assumptions were drawn regarding the public's awareness, access to technology, ability to read and comprehend the technical material and understand expressions used in the logging sector. This highlights the discriminatory nature of the process and a lack of transparency in consultation. A pilot study was not undertaken and this would have most likely identified shortfalls in the whole process. Now it seems that an unfaithful response to the assessment report has been identified. It is clear that the whole process which drives the nature of the enquiry was not based on procedural justice which puts at risk public will and the future of publicly owned State forests.

My thinking is that the Governments were either in a poor or ill-informed position to make the decision they did, or solely that they ignored public will. Given the absolute destruction witnessed recently (2018-2019) in the southern region's coastal forests, with respect, 'nobody in their right mind' would condone or support such a travesty. The grief caused to the local community is emotionally unhealthy. The damage to the environment will take 100 or so years to recover or, given changing climate conditions and logging frequency, may never recover.

Given the impact of climate change, we, as a nation, should be doing absolutely everything we can to abate emissions and store every single tonne of carbon we can. There are fair and just ways by which timber workers could be transitioned into other industries or into the plantation industry. These people know forests; they could 'hang up their swords' and start restoring them!

With all the science and experiential knowledge at our fingertips would it not seem to be the best thing to do to terminate the RFAs in the Southern and Eden Regions at least (if not all of NSW)?

My focus on the Southern and Eden Regions is influenced by the fact that this region is already experiencing less impact¹ and thus offers refugia for wildlife which could no longer sustain more northerly hotter conditions. Damage to the native forests here is thus more likely to seal the fate of our precious unique wildlife.



In light of the governments' ethically questionable public feedback process, and the results, in sincerity, I would like to know environmentally valid reasons for re-signing the Eden RFA in 2019 and/or the Southern RFA in 2021 please.

Yours sincerely

Bronte Somerset, M.Educ.(Ad.Ed.&Trng); Ed.D. (UTS, 2008)

¹ Windy app. Indicating temperature 1.00 pm Tuesday 19 February 2019.