

MEDIA RELEASE: “Right to Farm Bill” aims to criminalise woodchip protests

The South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA) is warning that the Right to Farm Bill 2019¹ currently in the NSW Parliament is a covert attack on peaceful protests to protect forests.

Forest defenders who enter the woodchipping operations on public lands could be liable to fines of up to \$22,000 or imprisonment for 3 years, SERCA Deputy Convener Harriett Swift said.

"The Right to Farm Bill 2019 includes forestry as an agricultural activity and makes any activity that hinders, or attempts or intends to hinder, logging an 'aggravated offence' liable to a \$22,000 fine or imprisonment for 3 years if a person entering 'inclosed lands' is accompanied by 2 or more other people.

"Inclosed lands are defined² to include State forests where they are fenced or defined by a natural feature, which includes most State Forests.

"Even to incite or induce people to enter a State Forest carries a \$11,000 fine or imprisonment for 12 months.

"I am one of quite a few local conservationists who have convictions for 'entering inclosed lands' because I have entered the chipmill for protests."

"Had I carried out this action under the new Bill I might well have ended up in jail," Ms Swift said.

"At a time when protecting forests is increasingly recognised worldwide as a critical measure to slow climate change, this Bill is not in the public interest.

"The Berejiklian Government is hiding behind so called 'rights to farm' as a covert way to criminalise forest protests." Ms Swift said.

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¹ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bill/files/3670/First%20Print.pdf>

² http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ilpa1901264/s3.html#inclosed_lands