



South East Region Conservation Alliance Inc

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Mr Gary Whytcross and Mr Steve Hartley
Environment Protection Authority

Dear Gary and Steve

You may be aware that on 29 July three environmental groups (My Environment, Environment East Gippsland and the South East Region Environment Alliance) released a report prepared by the Australian Network of Environmental Defenders Offices titled *One Stop Chop - How Regional Forest Agreements Streamline Environmental Destruction*. The report summary and media release are attached. The full report can be viewed at www.edovic.org.au/blog/RFA-report. There is considerable reference to the situation in NSW, including to issues that come within the responsibilities of the EPA, though the Regional Forest Agreements are of course political documents between the Commonwealth and NSW.

The environmental groups have written to the Premiers of the States with RFAs expressing our concerns, including about the legality of current arrangements.

While the report concentrates on legal frameworks and outcomes the RFAs operate in an industry and market context that has undergone major structural changes since the RFAs were negotiated. Proposed regulation changes to the POE Act that is scheduled for discussion at tomorrow's meeting with the Nature Conservation Council's forest working group also need to be considered within this broader context.

SERCA would like to propose discussions with relevant people in the EPA on the findings of the report and on the proposed changes to the POE Act, including a briefing by Dr Judith Ajani of the Fenner School at the Australian National University on the current situation in the forestry industry, both native forest and plantation sectors. SERCA has a formal agreement with ANU Enterprises for Dr Ajani to advise SERCA on the economics of the forestry industry. It is over a year since Steve attended an earlier briefing by Dr Ajani with Minister Parker's chief of staff.

I shall be contacting Ministerial offices separately seeking meetings.

SERCA will be putting in a submission to the EPA strongly opposing the proposed regulation changes. It considers that they have no social mandate and are designed to entrench a damaging and collapsing woodchip sector, just when there is the opportunity to put sensible forestry policies in place with benefits for native forests and their fast diminishing wildlife, for the plantation sector, for other regional industries and for the State's finances.

Yours sincerely

Heather Kenway

Committee member

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