

Nick Milham
Regional Forest Agreement renewal
To: Bronte Somerset

Inbox - Google 7 May 2018 at 1:02 pm



Response from Nick Milham, Group Director, Forestry Policy, Research & Development,
Department of Primary Industries (DPI)

Dear Dr Somerset

Thank you for taking the time to write in relation to the renewal of the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) in NSW. Your correspondence was referred to the Hon Paul Toole MP, Minister for Lands and Forestry and Minister for Racing, who has asked that I respond to you on his behalf.

I note that the Environment Protection Authority has already responded to you on behalf of the Minister for the Environment.

Both the NSW and Commonwealth Governments are committed to the renewal of the three RFAs in NSW and to strike a long-term sustainable balance between economic, social and environmental demands on forests. The NSW Government flagged this position in 2016 in the NSW Forestry Industry Roadmap and it was part of the electoral platform of the current Commonwealth Government. The governments agree that the RFA model provides an appropriate framework to balance and protect the full range of environmental, social, economic and heritage values that forests provide, now and for future generations.

Hence, as clearly explained at the time, whether or not the RFAs should be renewed was not within the scope of the recent public consultation process. Rather, the partner governments were seeking feedback on the form and content of the future RFAs, including proposals such as:

- providing for a five-year rolling extension mechanism subject to outcomes from the previous five-yearly review
- aligning five-yearly reporting obligations between RFA regions and, ideally, with other national reporting obligations (e.g. Australia's State of the Forest Report)
- updating the agreements by:
 - simplifying structure and content;
 - removing redundant, completed or duplicated commitments;
 - including contemporary references to legislation, regulation, codes of practice or processes;
 - including contemporary commitments that reflect current and future policies that align with the National Forest Policy Statement (e.g. climate change); and
 - reframing existing commitments to ensure they are durable, reflect contemporary understandings of sustainable forest management and are meaningful into the future.

The consultation process was designed following feedback from peak industry and environmental stakeholders and with the support of a professional independent facilitator, Eltons Consulting. Eltons Consulting have a strong track record in this field and outsourcing the consultation process, particularly facilitation of the stakeholders forums, was designed to ensure that the engagement processes were impartial and appropriate.

Several mechanisms for making face-to-face and written submissions were provided over a 13 week consultation period from 21 November 2017 to 12 March 2018, including public drop-in sessions and invitation-only seminars in six regional towns and in central Sydney. These opportunities were

publicised through local print, radio and TV media, community and industry contacts, on the web and in social media.

An independent report by Elton's Consulting on the stakeholder meetings and drop in sessions will be publicly released. Also, a list of all stakeholder submissions will be made public and the submissions released, where the submitters have indicated agreement. The submissions will be published on the DPI website, together with a high-level summary prepared by DPI Forestry.

Input from all stakeholders will be taken into account in getting the balance right in the long-term management of our forest resources. The written submissions, suggestions and feedback provided during the meetings and drop-in sessions and the findings of the independent reviewer will all be considered in the development of improvements to the renewed RFAs.

Please refer to the DPI website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forestry for more information on the RFA renewal process or if you have more specific questions, please contact forests@industry.nsw.gov.au.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to the NSW Government's attention. I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

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