



The Honourable Matt Kean MP
Minister for Energy and Environment

Ref: MD21/1590

Ms Harriett Swift
Deputy Convener
South East Region Conservation Alliance Inc.
1021 Dr George Mountain Rd
BEGA NSW 2550

By email: harriett@savetheforests.org.au

Dear Ms Swift

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the South East Region Conservation Alliance Inc. about native forest logging on the south coast. I appreciate you bringing your concerns to my attention.

Unprecedented bushfires have had a major impact on native forests, the environment, regional economies, jobs and communities.

The NSW Government is taking bushfire recovery seriously and is committed to protecting our native species. As part of fire recovery efforts and its COVID-19 response, the Government must also secure regional jobs, economies and timber for rebuilding communities. This includes continuing forestry operations in a mix of burnt and unburnt state forests where it can be done in an environmentally safe manner.

The Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) is authorised to undertake native forestry operations in state forests by the *Forestry Act 2012*, provided it complies with Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals (IFOAs). The IFOAs set out conditions designed to manage the impact of forestry operations on the environment, including rules which protect soils, water, ecosystems, native plants and animals.

For timber harvesting in some burnt areas, IFOAs were supplemented with additional site-specific operating conditions issued by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA). These conditions were tailored to mitigate the environmental risks that occur at each site from the fires. For example, they required unburnt forest to be protected and increased protections for streams, hollow-bearing trees and feed trees.

While FCNSW has recently announced its plans to return to operating under the Coastal IFOA, the EPA is continuing to work with FCNSW and other NSW Government agencies to determine a long-term approach to managing the risks posed by timber harvesting in post-fire landscapes of coastal NSW.

Recently, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) was engaged to review the available scientific evidence on the environmental impacts of forestry operations in areas affected by the 2019-20 bushfires. The NRC will recommend best-practice approaches to ensure forestry operations in fire-impacted forests are carried out in an ecologically sustainable manner, and therefore meet the requirements of the *Forestry Act 2012*, the Coastal IFOA and relevant Regional Forest Agreements.

The NRC is expected to deliver its findings later this year.

The EPA has also increased its regulatory presence on the ground at all stages of logging operations to promote compliance with the Coastal IFOA. The EPA will take appropriate regulatory action to address any non-compliance observed and has a suite of regulatory tools to drive compliance and environmental outcomes. The EPA will also work closely with community, industry, Aboriginal and environment groups, concerned about the impact of logging on the environment, their communities and their regional economies.

Regular updates on the regulation of native forestry after the 2019-20 bushfires are posted on the EPA's website at www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/native-forestry/bushfire-affected-forestry-operations.

If you have any more questions about this issue, please contact Jackie Miles, Director Regulatory Policy and Reform, EPA on 9995 6701 or at jacquelyn.miles@epa.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



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9.6.21