

MEDIA RELEASE

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Lack of Commonwealth accountability means forests destined to go the same way as rivers

Following briefings with Commonwealth and NSW environment and primary industry agencies, environment groups are more convinced than ever that the newly minted Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) will facilitate the continuing decline of threatened species, unsustainable destruction of forests and the loss of important benefits they provide to communities.

It is clear that the Commonwealth government has simply accepted at face value the assurances given by NSW regarding protection of threatened species rather than rigorously discharging its duty to ensure no further species go extinct. It has also failed to challenge NSW on cherry picking research in regards the impact of logging on carbon stores—despite its own documents¹ stating that logging reduces carbon stores of forests.

The lack of accountability and passiveness of the Commonwealth government against State self-interest, and the overriding priority given to maintaining wood supply to industry, makes a Murray-Darling Basin scenario of ecosystem collapse almost inevitable.

Peter Robertson of The Wilderness Society said: “The process is completely broken. We’re in a terrible new reality where no-one is taking responsibility for our natural heritage and they’re passing the buck between each other. The RFAs are, pure and simple, a licence to destroy our forests with impunity. We urgently need better laws that can protect nature.”

Susie Russell of the North Coast Environment Council said: “The unfolding ecological catastrophe we are witnessing right now in the Murray-Darling shows what happens when the Commonwealth fails to hold the states accountable and step in to protect the public interest.”

“It’s painfully clear that no concrete data was used to assess the impacts of the last 20 years of logging before committing to another 20. There has been a complete failure on the part of the Commonwealth to discharge its duty to protect matters of national environmental significance. That is simply inexcusable,” said **Dr Oisín Sweeney, Senior Ecologist with the National Parks Association of NSW**.

Harriett Swift of the South East Regional Conservation Alliance said: “We’re overseeing a wildlife crisis, and this is why. We’re being given bland assurances that everything will be fine, but it’s obvious they just don’t care. RFAs have allowed the woodchip industry to destroy the natural values of forests for decades and the Commonwealth has done nothing to stop it. Are we really to believe that this time round will be different?” **ENDS**

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¹See page 27 in:

http://data.daff.gov.au/data/warehouse/9aaf/9aafe003/fag17d9abfe20170822/ForestsAtGlance_2017_v1.0.0.pdf