

EMAIL from: Burke, Tony (MP)
Date: Mon, 26 Mar 2018 at 6:27 pm
Subject: RE: RFAs
To: Lisa Pfitzner

Dear Lisa,

Thank you for your email concerning Regional Forest Agreements.

Labor is the party for the environment. It was Labor that put in place the world's largest network of marine reserves, it was Labor that solved 100 years of conflict over the Murray Darling Basin, it was Labor who put forward a carbon price and has real climate change policies and it was Labor that delivered the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. All of these initiatives were either actively opposed or publicly criticised by the Federal Greens.

Labor knows that when industry and environment stakeholders come together they can reach agreement over forest protection and jobs. The Heads of Agreement with the Tasmanian Government in 2011 put over 400,000 hectares of high conservation value forest in to protection and 173,000 hectares added to the World Heritage listed area. The Agreement took years to negotiate but it remains today and ended years of conflict. In addition to forest reserves it provides funding for displaced timber workers and guaranteed sustainable wood supplies.

Even when the Abbott Government went to the World Heritage Committee and tried to tear up the Agreement, it was unable to. The Agreement, supported by Labor remains in place. The forests, protected by Labor remain untouched.

Labor has supported Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) as a way to manage forests. If RFAs are not delivering, this is something Labor will address in Government.

The Great Forest National Park is primarily a State issue. However, Labor is concerned that the Minister for Environment and Energy is considering downgrading protections for the critically endangered Leadbeater's possum. The Minister is currently reviewing the listing status of 'fairy possums' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 – even though the possum was listed as critically endangered three years ago now, and its situation has not changed since. The possums are still listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as critically endangered, and have been on the list since 1982.

Labor is demanding a briefing from Government officials to investigate whether the Minister's review process is scientifically rigorous and follows correct procedures.

Labor will also look closely at the Turnbull Government's proposed national Forestry Plan. It is disappointing that since taking office in 2013, the Coalition Government still lacks a viable, definitive plan to truly deliver the important protections Australia's native forests need.

Sincerely,

Tony Burke