



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

C09/15843

Mr Dane Wimbush
13 Pacific Drive
BERMAGUI NSW 2546

Dear Mr Wimbush

Thank you for your letter to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP received on 4 September 2009, concerning forestry activities between Gulaga and Biamanga National Parks. I have been asked to respond.

I appreciate your commitment to the conservation of these forests.

As you may be aware, the management and protection of forest areas in New South Wales is governed by Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) signed by the Australian and NSW governments between 1999 and 2001.

The Australian Government is committed to the RFAs which seek to balance the conservation of NSW biodiversity, old-growth forests, wilderness and other natural and cultural values with a sustainable forest industry that can provide employment security and regional prosperity. Striking this balance is inevitably a matter of judgement and the RFAs provide a robust means for governments to work together to meet our respective responsibilities over time.

The RFAs established a comprehensive, adequate and representative forest reserve system based on scientifically sound, nationally agreed criteria. This increased the size of the forest conservation reserve system, including an additional 628,364 hectares of old growth forest in NSW.

Under the RFAs, ongoing forest management, including harvesting operations and maintenance of the reserve system, are the responsibility of the State Governments. However, as a party to the RFAs the Australian Government has an ongoing role in working with the State to ensure the provisions and the intent of the RFA are met.

At the Australian Government-level, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Tony Burke MP has responsibility for forestry matters, including RFAs.

You may be interested to know the first five yearly review of the NSW RFAs has commenced. Further information on the review can be found at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/forestagreements/RFAreviews.htm> .

The Australian Government has also invested \$180 million boost to Australia's National Reserve System (NRS), as part of the Government's more than \$2 billion *Caring for our Country* initiative. This funding for the National Reserve System will be rolled out over the next four years, to help partners such as conservation

groups, farmers, Indigenous communities and all levels of government to create new reserves and protected areas across Australia. Further information about the NRS can be found on the DEWHA website at www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs/index.html.

Thank you for raising your concerns with the Australian Government.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlie Zammit', written in a cursive style.

Dr Charlie Zammit

Assistant Secretary Biodiversity Conservation Branch

25 September 2009