

**MEDIA RELEASE: LOGGING OF PUBLIC NATIVE FORESTS HAS LOST ITS SOCIAL LICENCE.
DAILAN PUGH, NORTH EAST FOREST ALLIANCE. 26.06.2018**

The North East Forest Alliance maintains that submissions to the NSW Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) show that the logging of public native forests has lost its social licence and that the community do not support the NSW and Commonwealth Government's proposals to extend the RFAs for 20 more years.

Of the 5,425 submissions to the RFAs only 23 supported the Government's proposal to extend the RFAs for 20 years and give additional five-year rolling extensions after each future five-yearly review, and nearly all these were from the industry.

The so-called 'Independent Review' of NSW's Regional Forest Agreements was tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament on 25 June 2018.

The review notes 'The majority of submitters would like the State to cease native forest logging on public land, indicating it damages biodiversity, environmental values and environmental services such as water, carbon capture and amenity, and provides a low economic return'.

"The Regional Forest Agreements have no credibility, their only purpose is for the Commonwealth to avoid its legal obligations for threatened species and heritage under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.", said NEFA spokesperson Dailan Pugh.

"The NSW and Federal Government's commitment to provide 20-year extensions to Regional Forest Agreements was given well before this sham review, so it is no surprise that irrespective of the results they will proceed regardless.

"Exemplifying the Government's contempt for their RFA obligations the first five-year review was 9 years late, the second one was 8 years late and now the third one is 3 years late. The reviewer considered this reflects poorly on the "transparency, commitment and accountability" of the RFA process.

"The reviewer identified that only 110 of the 200 commitments given in the RFAs have been achieved, and we believe he was being very generous.

"Even the industry body Timber NSW identified that 35 of the 44 sustainability indicators were inadequately reported upon for one or more reasons, identifying they are 'data deficient, incomplete, overly generic, tenure limited and or out of date'.

"The so-called 'independent review' was just a rapid superficial desktop review. Many of the concerns raised by the community weren't even acknowledged or considered.

"NEFA is particularly concerned that a number of issues we presented detailed evidence on were totally ignored by the reviewer. For example, our submission had a 14-page section titled 'Recovery Plans', yet the reviewer claimed 'There were no comments specifically regarding the development of Recovery Plans for threatened forest dependent fauna and flora'.

"We are offended by the reviewer's summary dismissal of our documented and proven cases of widespread illegal logging. Apparently, he did not even read the detailed case histories we provided before unjustly dismissing all such claims as spurious.

"At least the reviewer listened to the saw-millers' complaints about over-estimated timber resources, inequitable distribution of resources and declining yields" Mr Pugh said.

The reviewer considered that a more thorough review is required to properly and objectively assess the science and evidence from the many (sometimes conflicting) studies on the industry, that reports impartially to the Governments, recommending:

The Parties conduct a contemporary review of the native forest timber industry considering the effect of climate change, the overall conservation status of the forest, the socio- economic position of relevant rural communities and support for the industry.

"The reviewer also identified that burning native forests for electricity is a contentious issue and consideration of its use should be included in the study of native forest logging.

"NEFA welcomes the proposed review as a necessary start before the RFAs are considered further, though the review needs to be genuinely independent of industry bias and expanded to consider the socio-economic benefits for communities of forests used for tourism, recreation, water yields, carbon storage and genetic resources.

"We also consider that a scientific review needs to look at the impacts of logging on threatened species and the spreading of logging dieback" Mr. Pugh said.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/native-forestry/about-public-native-forestry/regional-forest-agreements-assessments/review-regional-forest-agreements>