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Submission on the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) review and extension.

The Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society (LCB&CS) has been an advocate for the environment and other amenities for 45 years, not only in Lane Cove but in the wider community.

The flawed review process.

The NSW Government has already committed to extending the RFAs. This commitment was made prior to the review that is now being conducted, so this consultation cannot be regarded as genuine. The review should be collating evidence to assess the performance of the RFAs with a view to making an evidence-based decision assessing whether they are an appropriate model for forest management.

The purpose of RFAs.

Broadly, the RFAs were designed to facilitate multiple uses of public native forests: conservation (via the establishment of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative, (CAR), reserve network of forest ecosystems); timber extraction and recreation. The concept of Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM), which incorporates the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development, was to underpin logging to ensure that logging did not result in negative impacts on forest ecosystems.

Failure to perform their role.

The RFAs have failed to protect the environment, failed to result in a thriving timber industry and are driving climate change. The RFAs are therefore a failed model for forest management.

This public asset must be managed for the public good. Logging is robbing future generations. The progress report for the RFA review fails to provide any data to support the assertions that logging is conforming to ESFM. In contrast, there is much evidence that forest wildlife is in decline, we know logging reduces carbon stores, exacerbates loss of water supplies and we know the majority of people support protecting forests.

Research in the Victorian Central Highlands shows that the value of water, carbon and tourism dwarf that of timber. Our Governments must consider all economic and social benefits from forests in their assessments.

The NSW taxpayer has paid millions of dollars to a multi-national corporation to buy-back non-existent timber because of over-estimated timber volumes by Forestry Corporation. This is one of a series of subsidies that the logging industry receives.

The number of threatened forest species has continued to rise during the RFAs, with iconic species like koalas and gliders now either absent or experiencing population crashes in many parts of NSW. Logging is identified as a key threat to many forest species, often because of the impact logging has on key habitat features like hollow-bearing trees.

Conclusion

The consultation process is entirely inadequate as the outcome appears to be predetermined.

The RFAs have failed to protect the environment, failed to result in a thriving timber industry and are driving climate change. The RFAs are therefore a failed model for forest management.

The progress report for the RFA review fails to provide any data to support the assertions that logging is conforming to ESFM.

The Government should use the end of the RFAs as the point at which it implements a just transition out of native forest logging on public land.



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