



Australian Government

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF NSW REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENTS

The Independent Review was tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament on 25 June 2018 and makes 16 recommendations to improve the delivery of the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) in NSW.

A comprehensive joint NSW and Australian governments' response to the review is being prepared, outlining how these recommendations will be addressed. The NSW and Australian governments note the following in relation to the key themes of the review:

Governments' commitments to RFAs

The Australian Government is working to deliver its commitment to provide 20-year extensions to the agreements, with an additional five-year rolling extension subject to satisfactory performance, added at each five-yearly review point.

The 2016 NSW Forestry Industry Roadmap sets out the NSW Government's commitment to RFAs, and both governments are working to ensure the renewal of these agreements is finalised as a matter of priority.

Government coordination of forest management and reporting

The NSW and Australian governments have various governance and oversight arrangements in place for the renewal of RFAs and their ongoing implementation. NSW is investing in improved forest monitoring, delivering enhanced information to support sustainable forest management, performance monitoring and reporting, resource management and forest health.

Alignment and streamlining of reporting requirements

The NSW and Australian governments are committed to improved accountability and transparency, including through closer alignment between RFA reporting and other national reporting obligations such as the national State of the Forests Report.

The renewed RFAs will continue to require regular, five-yearly, performance reviews. The NSW and Australian governments are proposing to include a rolling extension mechanism, whereby the RFAs will be extended by five years if the five-yearly review is undertaken and a satisfactory outcome is achieved.

Updated forest management practices and the changing environment

Both governments are committed to continuous improvement and contemporary forest management practices, reflecting emerging issues including climate change and the carbon economy, socio-economic issues, and opportunities to enhance carbon storage in forests and in forest products.

Preparing future RFAs

The Independent Reviewer made various recommendations around improvements to the RFAs. This included recommendations on improving the accessibility and readability of the RFAs, enhanced stakeholder and community engagement, and improved transparency on the amendment and review of RFAs. These recommendations are being considered as part of the renewal process for the RFAs.

Further information and next steps

The NSW and Australian governments are preparing a formal joint response and this report will be made public.

The NSW and Australian governments have committed to renew the NSW RFAs for a further twenty years and following extensive consultation, the agreements are now being finalised in close collaboration.