



## Environment and heritage

---

The North East RFA region covers nearly 10 million hectares (3.9 million in the Upper North East and 5.8 million in Lower North East), from the Queensland border to the edge of the Sydney basin. About a third of the total area of the two regions is forested public land. About two thirds (6.3 million hectares) is private land, though not all of this is forested.

### The CAR Reserve System

The RFA establishes a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) Reserve System that is based on nationally agreed criteria for the protection of forest biodiversity, old-growth and wilderness values.\* The CAR Reserve System includes:

- **Dedicated reserves (national parks, nature reserves, flora reserves);**
- **Informal reserves on State Forests (such as forest management zones), Crown lands and state Recreation Areas; and**
- **Forest management prescriptions under Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals.**

The CAR Reserve System in the Upper North East covers 718,300 hectares, or about 55.4 per cent of the region's public land. This includes 506,200 hectares in dedicated reserves; 93,800 hectares in informal reserves and 118,300 hectares covered by prescriptions.

The CAR Reserve System in the Lower North East covers 1,422,400 hectares, or about 67.4 per cent of the region's public land. This includes 1,169,400 hectares in dedicated reserves; 148,700 hectares in informal reserves and 104,300 hectares covered by prescriptions.

### Forest ecosystems

#### Upper North East

Of the 162 forest ecosystems identified in the UNE region, 72 (44.4 per cent) have had their JANIS targets met within the CAR Reserve System. Forest management prescriptions on State forest provide considerable additional protection to rare non-commercial forest ecosystems and non-forest ecosystems (eg rainforest, grassland, wetland, heath). Sixty-three ecosystems have been identified as priorities for voluntary conservation on private land.

---

\* The JANIS criteria are the 'Nationally Agreed Criteria for the Establishment of a Comprehensive Adequate and Representative Reserve System for Forests in Australia', aiming to protect 15 per cent of each forest type as existed before European arrival, at least 60 per cent of old-growth forest and 99 per cent or more of high quality wilderness. 'JANIS' stands for the Joint ANZECC/MCFFA National Forest Policy Statement implementation Subcommittee, which developed the criteria.

## **Lower North East**

Of the 199 forest ecosystems identified in the region, 91 (45.7 per cent) have had their JANIS targets met within the CAR Reserve System. Forest management prescriptions on State forest provide considerable additional protection to rare non-commercial forest ecosystems and non-forest ecosystems (eg rainforest, grassland, wetland, heath). Ninety-one ecosystems have been identified as priorities for voluntary conservation on private land.

## **Old Growth**

One hundred and forty four forest ecosystems in the UNE and 178 in the LNE have an old growth component. Fifty-seven per cent of the 654,600 hectares of old growth in the UNE and 72 per cent of the 1.03 million hectares of old growth in the LNE is in the CAR Reserve System. Additional protection for High Conservation Value Old Growth is provided under the Integrated Forest Operations Approvals.

## **Wilderness**

Fifty-nine per cent of wilderness as defined in the JANIS Reserve Criteria in the Upper North East is protected within dedicated reserves. Of the wilderness outside dedicated reserves, two thirds (66 per cent) is on freehold or leasehold land. Eighty-four per cent of wilderness as defined in the JANIS Reserve Criteria in the Lower North East is protected within dedicated reserves. Of the wilderness outside formal reserve, 66 per cent is on freehold or leasehold land.

## **Threatened species and forest communities**

More than 109 threatened and/or forest dependent species of plants and 144 animal species were assessed in the Upper and Lower North East regions. Animals included the barking owl, masked owl, southern barred frog, squirrel glider and yellow bellied glider. Plants included the hairy quandong (UNE) and a species of green hood orchid (LNE).

Under the RFA, these species will be protected within the reserve system and through prescriptions. Priorities for developing Recovery Plans for threatened forest dependent flora and fauna are provided in Attachment 3 of the RFA.

## **National Estate**

The RFA has added to our knowledge of the region's national estate values and improves their protection and management through a combination of reservation (both dedicated and informal) and management prescriptions off reserve. See Attachment 4 of the RFA.

## **World heritage**

The Upper and Lower North East RFA regions contains most of the Central Eastern Rainforest World Heritage Area. Australian rainforests are an outstanding example of ecosystems unique in the world. Both governments agree that any further world heritage nominations will come from within the CAR Reserve System.

## **Non-Indigenous heritage**

The RFA has greatly improved our knowledge of places in the region's forests with historic, social or aesthetic values. Forestry, mining, pastoralism and other activities have left their mark on the landscape with sawmills, sleeper cutter sites, gold mines and bullock tracks. Sites in the UNE and LNE of particular significance to regional communities include the Bird Tree, McGrath's Hump, Platypus Flat and World War 11 TankTraps on the Brisbane Line and the Trestle Bridge from a 1930s logging railway in Wang Wark State Forest. Barrington Tops, Dingo Tops, the Dorrigo Plateau and the Richmond Range are important sites of natural heritage. Statewide Guidelines for the Management of Cultural Heritage Values and Places consistent with national and international guidelines have been developed. These will be the framework for management, identification and protection of cultural values,

## **Indigenous heritage**

The RFA contains a package of measures for implementation by NSW to ensure the appropriate management of Indigenous heritage, including the maintenance of traditional uses and values. It is recognised that such heritage is not confined to archaeological sites and artefacts but may include natural values such as flora, fauna and landforms.

These measures include a commitment to develop Indigenous management arrangements which consider Indigenous culture and values and enable Indigenous people to gain access to, and use of, land for traditional, cultural and socio-economic purposes.

## **Indigenous ownership**

The RFA is not intended to influence either current or future Native Title claims in any way. The NSW Government has provided for Aboriginal people to own lands of cultural significance under specific State acts.