



SUBMISSION

Modernisation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements

June 29th, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

I have held many positions, paid and unpaid, working for the natural environment including [REDACTED] Farm Tree and Landcare Association, [REDACTED] local landcare group and of Bush Heritage Australia, and [REDACTED]

If a system of governance is actively pushing some already threatened – some critically - species closer to extinction then there is something fundamentally wrong unless, of course, it is an explicit government policy to actively move species towards extinction (their behaviour suggests this given there is very little funding for threatened species).

Given that our national government has responsibilities to enact international treaties to which it is a party and hence has agreed to protect and enhance Australia's biodiversity it should have targets, programs, legislation, funding etc that should ensure that our species are not threatened. This is especially true given the threat to species from the climate crisis. Let alone the obvious need for our ecological home to be healthy for our own health.

There is considerable overlap between species that are officially listed on our national threatened species list and areas of forest that have been logged under the RFAs. Some of the better known threatened species include the Swift Parrot, Leadbeaters Possum and Greater Gliders.

For a threatened species' habitat to be 'legally' logged, that is to push this species closer to extinction, because of an RFA is clearly a nonsense, and worse, that the RFA means that the national government cannot take action even if a vast majority of the Australian public rose up in arms, is also a nonsense. Our national government is ultimately responsible and must officially take back that responsibility for protection of nationally threatened species and ecological communities and threatening processes in our forests (or anywhere).

As stated, the objectives of the RFAs are:

- 1. To identify a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system and provide for the conservation of those areas.**

Comment: The CAR system is no longer seen as sufficient for the long term resilience of ecological systems and species especially (but not only) in the face of the climate change. Healthy ecological processes is critical, as is 'connectivity' to enable species to move.

2. To provide for the ecologically sustainable management and use of forests in each RFA region.

Comment: If threatened species habitats are being logged and increasing the threat to these already officially threatened species then this cannot be 'ecologically sustainable management' of forests.

3. To provide for the long-term stability of forests and forest industries.

Comment: Why should any one industry have long term stability when we all have to move on given changing technologies and needs? We don't ride have horses and jinkers so blacksmiths have gone. Plantation timbers and good paper recycling can supply nearly all our timber product needs.

When carbon sequestration is paramount, and species viability too, there is no room for nostalgia about an industry whose workers have had more transition payouts than almost any other industry I am aware of.

However, workers and families should be offered transition packages – their last chance for this century. But, don't promise the farm when the produce of the farm relies on government subsidies and when its production is clearly not in the interests of the rest of society.

In summary: the RFAs should go – “modernisation” is a furphy; national government should resume control (funding etc) for nationally threatened species, native forests should be kept at least for their carbon sequestration value, plus all those other values that are in direct conflict with logging, and transition package provided (again) for the workers and families who depend on this activity.

Your sincerely,

