



Media Release

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Forest Industry welcomes Garrett's support for Regional Forest Agreements

The National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) has welcomed comments by Environment Minister, Peter Garrett on the Hawke review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and particularly the Minister's comments on the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs). Minister Garrett's comments follow those of Forestry Minister Tony Burke who recently stated that RFAs were the 'corner stone of Australia's national forest policy' as they 'already provided certainty to our forest industries, timber workers and the regional communities who depend on forestry'.

NAFI is pleased that Minister Garrett appreciates the comprehensive legislative framework that the forest industry already operates in. "His supporting comments for the long-term policy vision of RFAs is testament to this. NAFI is also pleased that the Minister Garrett and the Hawke review have acknowledged the achievements of the Tasmanian Government in meeting its RFA legislative review commitments. Tasmania has set the example for other signatory State Governments who have not meet or who are in the process of meeting their agreement obligations", said NAFI CEO Allan Hansard.

RFAs are forged between the Commonwealth and State Governments to achieve the balance between management of forests for conservation and timber production outcomes. RFAs are founded on comprehensive assessments of environmental, social and economic values of Australia's forests and are integral in providing long-term security for the forest industry and the timber communities that rely on them.

The forest industry is still assessing all the recommendations of the Hawke review. However, it is clear the report is encouraging healthy debate on how well we manage all of Australia's forests for environmental outcomes. Though there has been considerable focus on how we manage our multiple use forests for timber and environmental outcomes, the unasked question from the Hawke review is how well are we managing the significant area of forests in our National Parks and forest reserves to reduce the risk of bushfires, pests and diseases and to maintain or improve their environmental values? This is a particularly important question given the increasing risk of bushfires facing Australia's forests and communities that live in and around them.

Perhaps it is time to insist that the management of National Parks and forest reserves are subject to the same high level of environmental management and performance as our sustainably managed timber production forests.

NAFI looks forward to working constructively with the Federal and State Governments to ensure all of Australia's forests are effectively managed for environmental, social and economic values. The RFAs are an essential policy platform in ensuring this happens.

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