



Media Release

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State government commitment to forest agreements essential to the future of Australia's sustainable forestry industry

The National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) is urging state governments to follow the lead of the Federal Government by reconfirming their commitments to Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) as the cornerstone of forest management in Australia, thereby ensuring ongoing investment and growth in Australia's sustainably managed forest industry.

"Federal Forestry Minister Tony Burke showed strong leadership with his recent commitment of the Federal Government to RFAs saying they are the primary mechanism to sustain jobs and support industry, to ensure high conservation values, and for the protection of biodiversity and threatened species," said NAFI CEO Allan Hansard.

"I've written to the forestry ministers in Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia asking them to do the same. I think it is fair to say that their response will be a litmus test of their commitment to the future of sustainable native forests and plantations and the broad range of economic and environmental benefits they provide.

"RFAs are a 20 year plan for 10 forest regions across Australia developed on the back of the largest scientific assessment and stakeholder consultation ever undertaken for Australia's forests. Each one is an agreement between the Commonwealth and relevant state government therefore the states need to follow the Commonwealth's lead and recommit to them.

"This is only way to ensure the certainty of resource security needed to generate investment in such a long term endeavour as Australia's sustainably managed forest industry, while also removing the temptation to use our sustainably managed forests as a political bargaining chip. As we have seen in the past, governments can be tempted to compromise on previous commitments and take a hit at industry by locking up additional areas of forest as a way of winning green preferences.

"Ongoing investment and growth of the forest industry is expected to deliver 16,000 new jobs, \$19 billion in new investment, largely in rural and regional Australia and provide an annual carbon sequestration of 81 million tonnes by 2020, but this is only possible with state government commitment to resource security, as provided through the RFAs.

"The RFAs established a comprehensive and world class forest reserve system and accredited state level ecologically sustainable forest management systems, to ensure the ongoing protection of biodiversity values and the sustainable harvest of renewable forest resources in multiple-use areas.

"As part of the recommitment by governments we would like to see the RFAs rolled over or extended to provide ongoing 20 year security for the industry, timber communities and the multiple-use and conservation reserves established as part of the RFAs. This is important as most of the RFAs have less than 10 years before their termination date and every year that goes by is one less year of certainty for investment certainty for industry and job security for timber communities.

“In addition, our sustainably managed native forests and plantations have a significant role to play in climate change policy and can help our economy move to a low emissions future. Our sustainably managed native forests provide a growing carbon store, the renewable products produced from these forests are also carbon stores, and we can produce renewable electricity and biofuels from the woody biomass and residues. These are opportunities for all Australians that should be recognized and form part of a recommitment to the RFAs.”

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