

Draft NRG report for June 2018 NGT:

By Sledge NRG President

What do the following issues have in common? Rip-offs from the Murray -Darling water schemes, private extraction of public groundwater, destructive forestry practices, loss of habitat for native wildlife, climate change and species extinction? A. The NSW government is deeply involved in re-writing the rules for all these things and more, while they say soothing words to lull the gullible into submission . Am I being overdramatic? I don't think so.

I was part of a group which was "invited" to consult with NSW and C'wealth bureaucrats in February at a Lismore meeting which proposed that the Regional Forests Agreements (RFAs) which were instigated 20 years ago, be "rolled over" for another similar period. The RFAs were instigated as a means to "bring peace" to the areas of NSW where foresters were challenged by people who sought to protect and preserve native forests.

The gathering at Lismore was separate from a meeting earlier in the day with people described as industry representatives. The meeting for environmental "stakeholders" was also seeking to air the likelihood of changing the rules by which by which public estate forestry (now called Forestry Corporation), assisted by government agencies such as the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) can further assist commercial logging in state forests and privately held land. The environmental stakeholders" did not accept "consultation" to mean that bureaucrats tell us what they plan to do , but that they listen to our concerns and weigh up options for sustainable resource use. 86% of our sawn timber now comes from plantations. We put it to them it is time to complete the transition to 100% plantation forestry. Destructive logging employs very few people and there is not enough mature forsts to guaranty the amount of good logs the timber industry demands. We the taxpayers have been paying millions to companies (like Boral) in "compensation" under the RFAs. It is easy to see why the loggers and timber companies want to continue this cosy arrangement, but why would we want to ?

While we were in the meeting at Lismore, a group of concerned citizens gathered in a public park to share their views, and then came to protest (loudly) outside the bureaucrats' meeting. This is "consultation" that looks more like confrontation. I think the agencies would rather not have such meetings, but can they really avoid Lismore, and the Northern Rivers, with our long history of forest protection going back to the 1970's? The government agents would be called cowards, or worse.

In May 2018 the NSW Government released its draft *Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals* (IFOAs). These IFOAs regulate how logging of our native public forests takes place and what impacts logging has on our environment and wildlife.

The outcomes are getting progressively worse as they wind back conservation provisions to get more timber and the Forestry Corporation are allowed to set the rules. It seems that they intend to drastically reduce wildlife and watercourse protections.

The National Parks Association of NSW has been leading the analysis of the IFOA along with other the NSW Nature Conservation Council (NCC) and helping member groups such as Northern Rivers Guardians,, Nimbin Environment Center, Caldera Environment Centre etc to understand the proposed changes which are often couched in language which assures us of equal protection for wildlife conservation as for forestry. Analysis shows that sweeping retrograde changes are proposed that prioritise timber extraction over environmental protection, including:

- **Increasing logging intensity throughout public native forests**, including allowing high-intensity logging in 140,000ha of coastal forests between Taree and Grafton, enabling virtual clear-felling of areas up to 45ha in one go. Replantings would convert biologically complex, natural forests into monocultures of blackbutt – in order to provide sawlogs for the industry’s future.
- **Permitting logging in stream buffer zones that are currently out of bounds for logging.** These areas are the most important refuges for threatened species left in many forests, including gliders and quolls, and contain some of the most ecologically important trees in our forests.
- **Opening previously protected old-growth forest to logging** by changing the maps for these high-conservation-value areas to make up timber shortfalls. Old-growth forests are rare and provide vital refuges for threatened species, including large owls and gliders.
- **Permitting the logging of trees up to 140cm in diameter, and 160cm for blackbutt and alpine ash**, and removing the requirements to protect recruitment trees (the hollow-bearing trees needed for wildlife into the future) in logging operations.
- **Replacing the need to look for koalas** with a habitat model that will require the retention of a maximum of 10 feed trees of just 20cm diameter per hectare in mapped koala habitat.

The NSW Government is undertaking public consultation on the draft IFOA commencing this week with a series of invitation-only information sessions starting in Sydney and then moving to the regions – the north coast next week and then the south coast the following week. It is likely that they will also offer meetings to obtain stakeholder feedback. Closing date for written submissions is 5pm on 29 June 2018.

NEFA and NCC won’t be participating in the information or any feedback meetings but they will be making submissions. I strongly encourage you to do so too.

As forest /wildlife advocates, NEFA will be working with the National Parks Association of NSW and regional/local environmental groups to organise a series of information sessions to raise community awareness about the destruction

associated with current public forest logging and promote a better alternative for our public forests - one fit for the 21st century.

The meetings will be held in towns such as Nimbin (13/6), Kyogle (5/6)...Lismore...Mur'bah...

The NSW Government has clearly stated that it is committed to continuing logging of our native public forests for decades to come, despite any lack of scientific evidence that current logging agreements have been successful in meeting their objectives or that logging is the best use of our forests in the 21st century. In fact, it is now abandoning any pretence of sustainable logging by proposing dramatic erosions of environmental protection to meet timber supply shortfalls resulting from commercial mismanagement.

Alan Roberts says that 200,000m³ of timber is extracted from our forests per year for which we pay \$11m/yr to Forest Corp for their losses. We lose both timber, money, species, sequestered carbon etc. We'd be financially winning by \$11m/yr as well as environmentally just by not logging native forests at all.

Given this position, continuing to invest our time and resources in Government information and feedback sessions may be futile. However, continuing to fight for the future of our precious native forests and wildlife is not.

Details about upcoming workshops and rallies, in Sydney and along the north and south coast, will be emailed to you in coming weeks.

Kate Smolski, Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Nature Conservation Council (NCC) said,

“We will not participate in a sham consultation process and we will never give up the fight.”

Thanks for standing up for our forests!