

# Media Release



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## **NSW Regional Forest Agreements strike right balance on environmental, social and economic values**

Timber NSW and the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) today rejected unfounded attacks on the NSW Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs), which have over-delivered on environmental objectives and provide a level of certainty to the State's vital native timber industry that supports thousands of jobs across regional and metropolitan NSW.

The peak industry groups questioned NSW Labor's criticism today of RFAs when it was the NSW Labor Government that introduced, oversaw, and praised the RFA framework for more than a decade. In 2005, for example, then-Labor Environment Minister Bob Debus said in the NSW Parliament of the RFA framework he established:

*"In striking an appropriate balance between social, economic, environmental and cultural values, the Government's forestry assessments have set a national benchmark for the involvement of all stakeholders and community groups.*

*"They have resulted in a world-class conservation network that protects biodiversity, old-growth forests and wilderness, as well as providing secure access for the timber industry to timber resources and long-term certainty for the industry's future."*

- [Then-NSW Labor Environment Minister Bob Debus, 27 May 2005](#)

Timber NSW General Manager, Ms Maree McCaskill, said the signing of the State's three RFAs between 1999 and 2001 resulted in almost 2 million additional hectares of public forest transferred to National Parks and reserves, and the regulation surrounding the production and harvesting of NSW timber is among the strictest in the world.

"RFAs are designed to balance environmental, social and industry needs for certainty. Today, 80 per cent of NSW's forests are in National Parks and Reserves, while a further 10 per cent are in State Forest Reserves and protected areas not available for harvest. Just 1-2% per cent is selectively harvested each year and then regenerated as required by law," Ms McCaskill said.

AFPA represents forest growers, harvesters, and manufacturers of timber and paper products.

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“In the past 20 years, the conversion of State Forests to National Parks has halved the amount of timber that is produced and more than halved the land area available to supply it. Meanwhile, demand for NSW timber has more than doubled,” Ms McCaskill concluded.

AFPA Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ross Hampton, said it was critical that the Agreements are extended for a further 20 years as soon as possible to provide certainty into the future to the State’s forest industries.

“Australia has an annual trade deficit of more than \$2 billion in wood products because domestic demand continually outstrips supply. Any reduction in native forestry will lead to increased imports from other countries with weaker regulations and where tropical rainforests are logged unsustainably or even illegally,” Mr Hampton concluded.

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