

# Media Release

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## **WA RFA review finds environmental objectives met, but industry certainty lacking**

An [independent review](#) of Western Australia's Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) for the period 2009-2014 has found the agreement has delivered on key environmental objectives, but fell short in providing certainty for the state's forest industries.

The independent reviewer Graham Wilkinson found, "Commitments in the WA RFA relating to threatened flora and fauna were achieved", and "Timber harvesting operations are conducted in a manner that contributed to the maintenance of biodiversity value".

Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) CEO, Mr Ross Hampton, said the review provided a strong endorsement for extending the WA RFA, which expires in 2019, and showed that the national RFA framework strikes a balance between economic, environmental and social considerations for the sustainable management of Australia's forests.

"The review shows the RFA is delivering best practice environmental standards in the state's sustainable forest industries, but also found that more needs to be done to provide certainty of resource supply to industry to drive investment, support innovation and create jobs," Mr Hampton said.

The reviewer agreed with AFPA's submission to the review process in concluding that the RFA has failed to meet obligations around resource certainty for industry, and had failed to facilitate new investment in industry development and plantation expansion.

The review found timber availability had reduced because 21,884ha of forest were added to the reserve system between 2009-14, and the plantation estate declined by 41,700ha (10 per cent), which failed to deliver on objectives set out in the RFA and created uncertainty for industry.

Mr Hampton said this had been a problem for industry across all the RFAs, and must be addressed in the extended RFAs currently being considered by the Federal and state governments.

"While the WA review is welcome, it is vital that we see a 20-year extension across all RFAs without further delays to provide the certainty of resource supply necessary for industry to remain competitive, encourage investment and innovation, and underpin jobs," Mr Hampton said.

"The previous RFA process resulted in the transfer of more than 2 million hectares of forest to reserves, and subsequent decisions taken by states and territories have further increased the area of forests in reserves to around 3 million hectares. There are now 23 million hectares (or 16 per cent) of Australia's native forests in formal nature conservation reserves, compared with 6 per cent in 1990.

"Our industry will continue to work with the Federal and State Governments to ensure that the RFA framework continues to deliver on all its objectives."

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

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