

Media Release

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Federal Government's rejection of Samuel EPBC Review plan to scrap RFAs welcome

The Federal Government's commitment to retain Australia's successful Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) and reject the Samuel Review's criticism of them will be welcomed by forest industry workers around the country, Chair of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Mr Greg McCormack said today.

"We welcome Assistant Minister for Forestry Jonathon Duniam's commitment that the Federal Government will reject the Samuel Review's unfounded criticism of RFAs, and that the RFAs will be retained in their current form," Mr McCormack said.

"As the Assistant Minister for Forestry, my view is that we stick with RFAs, they are something that provides certainty and strength to our wonderful, world leading industry".

Assistant Minister Duniam – Senate Estimates hearings 23/03/21

"Assistant Minister Duniam's commitment that RFAs are here to stay is an endorsement of the sustainable forest practices in Australia and the rigorous environmental protections provided under the state environmental laws that are accredited under RFAs," Mr McCormack said.

"RFAs are required by law to be independently reviewed, and all the reviews have found that RFAs are meeting or exceeding environmental objectives while providing a level of certainty to industry. All RFAs were reviewed and renewed in recent years to ensure that they remained up to date and reflected the latest available science and were amended accordingly."

Mr McCormack said RFAs delivered significant protections for the environment and threatened species when they were developed and continue to do so.

"Nationally, as a result of the RFAs and public land use decisions, over 13.6 million hectares have been added to Australia's forest conservation reserve system. Meanwhile, timber harvesting operations occur on only a tiny fraction of Australia's native forest estate, using the equivalent of just 6 trees out of every 10,000 annually, and every tree is replaced as the areas are regenerated and regrown by law," Mr McCormack said.

"This commitment also provides much-needed certainty for the tens of thousands of workers whose livelihoods depend on our sustainably managed timber industries that RFAs support."

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“Our pathway forward will be guided by industry and they will tell us what they need, and my job is to deliver for them and that is providing them with security. My view is to maintain the RFAs broadly speaking in their current forms”.

Assistant Minister Duniam – Senate Estimates hearings 23/03/21

“As Assistant Minister Duniam told Estimates, industry is committed to working with the Federal Government on the continued improvement of the RFA framework, and a key part of that is to provide greater legal certainty for RFAs so that we put a stop to the lawfare that is stifling the industry,” Mr McCormack concluded.

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