

Media Release

23 May 2023

It's time for a National Cabinet discussion on sustainable forest resource security

The decision today by the Government of Victoria to accelerate the cessation of selective and sustainable native forest harvesting is an unnecessary surrender to environmental activists. It will result in even more hardwood being imported into Victoria from Tasmania and NSW. It will also add to current imports - already worth \$5.5 billion - much of which comes from the tropical forests of developing nations with lesser environmental standards than Australia.

That's no way to protect and conserve Australia's native forest estate or to halt global deforestation practices. Sustainable forestry management practices play no role in deforestation in Australia and decision makers need to understand the ramifications of their decisions.

Australia has signed a global pledge to halt deforestation practices by 2030. Decisions by State Governments to cease sustainable forestry management in Australia are contrary to the objects of the pledge and will lead to more unsustainable and illegal logging in other countries. Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) were created to ensure Australians can continue to access the hardwoods they need while protecting our native forest estate. Elements of RFAs include impacts on environment, social and economic factors. For 31 years that's what they have taken into consideration and the forest sector is continually improving management practices to ensure the longer-term health of Australia's native forests.

83% of the area of old-growth forest in RFA regions is included in the CAR reserve system in most recent data



● Proportion reserved before RFAs were signed ● Proportion reserved in most recent data ● Proportion unreserved

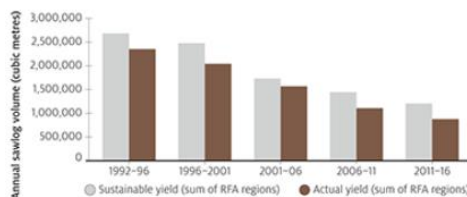
92% of the area of wilderness in RFA regions is included in the CAR reserve system in most recent data



Actual sawlog harvest level has always been below sustainable yield



Net harvestable area of forest on public land in RFA regions **has reduced from 33%** before RFAs were signed **to 17%** in most recent data



Sustainable yield of sawlogs has **decreased by 55%** since RFAs were signed

[ABARES DATA](#) - CAR – Comprehensive Adequate Representative System

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A quality, accessible and fire-resistant forest is a worked and managed one. That's the other benefit our RFAs deliver, as climate impacts have increased on native forests management practices, research and development has focused on how to build resilient sustainably managed forests.

Access to native hardwood resources provides the private sector and Government Business Enterprises involved in the sustainable management of native forestry, with the incentive to manage our forest and there is a growing focus on better understanding the practices of how First Nations people managed the land for tens of thousands of years. That's good for our economy, good for jobs, and good for the fauna that call our native forests home.

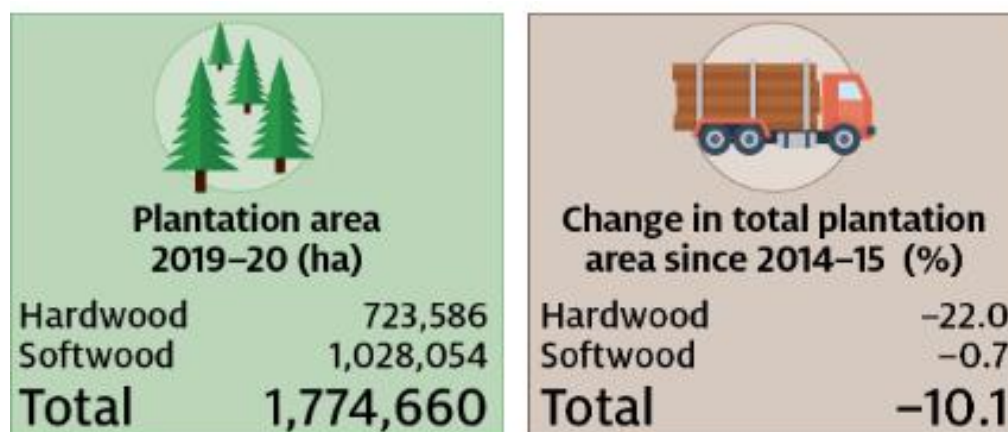
RFAs are an agreement between the Commonwealth and the States and AFPA acknowledges that the Federal Government is committed to upholding the RFAs. However, if the RFAs are falling short because of activist lawfare then the solution is to strengthen them rather than abandon them. On that basis, this is now a problem for the Federal Government as we approach a hardwood supply crisis.

It's time to elevate our growing import dependence and shrinking sovereign capability to the National Cabinet.

That's the only way to establish a national plan in a timely way. Stopping native forestry in one state to import the product from another state is not a plan. With a decision of the Federal Court on a challenge to the RFAs in NSW pending, AFPA is calling upon the Federal Government to urgently engage with the States to secure the domestically produced hardwood supplies our economy needs.

Australia is already a net importer of forestry product. Just as Australian investors are coming to realise the greater role forestry can play in addressing climate change and how much more we can do with carbon-storing-wood in the built environment, some state governments seem intent on killing the sector. Whilst some will argue that Australia should rely on its plantation estate. In real terms – despite the Albanese Government's welcome recent assistance measures - the plantation estate is in decline and hardwood trees take at least 45 years to grow.

Australia's forest sector is a sophisticated one and research and development is focused on doing more with each tree and innovation which allows structural timber to be manufactured using softwoods. The Albanese Government is supporting these efforts. But where will timber come from?



[ABARES Australian plantation statistics and log availability 2021 report](#)

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

AFPA again acknowledges the Federal Government's support to grow the plantation estate, but the harsh reality is, it cannot replace the timber and fibre-products our sustainably managed native forests provide to Australia for our everyday products Australian's love and decision makers take for granted.

Australia needs its sustainably managed native forest estate, and something has to be done for the sake of sovereign capability, our natural environment, and regional jobs.

ENDS

*Attributable to AFPA CEO, Joel Fitzgibbon.