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ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN

'Predetermined outcome' prompts green groups to ditch NSW forest talks

By Peter Hannam
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Environmental groups have dropped out of consultations over native logging on public lands, saying the Berejiklian government has already decided to roll over 20-year old agreements regardless of a review.



The NSW National Parks Association and the Nature Conservation Council had been participating in workshops over the future of three regional forestry agreements (RFA) originally signed between 1999 and 2001 to end the so-called "forests wars" in previous decades.

"It's a predetermined outcome," Alix Goodwin, chief executive of the NPA, said. "There will be a new RFA irrespective whether they've been successful in meeting their objectives, and whether they are the best use of our forests, particularly in the era of climate change."





Forestry in state forests has been loss-making, and environmental groups have long called for it to end.

Photo: Supplied

Kate Smolski, chief executive at the NCC, said koala populations in the state had "plummeted" during the RFAs, underscoring the need "for independent scientific reviews that will give us a clear understanding of what harm forestry has done to our threatened wildlife" over that time.

Minister for Forestry Paul Toole said the government had committed to renewing the RFAs in late 2016 but still "wants to hear from all who have an interest in forests".

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"RFAs represent the most effective framework for the sustainable management of forests," he said.

The three agreements, signed with the federal government, cover the southern, Eden and north-east forests. The NSW Environment Protection Authority is conducting a review of the three.

"The government has actually made a decision to renew the RFAs without assessing whether they have met their objectives," Ms Goodwin said.

The NPA view is that the loss-making forestry corporation showed the industry had not been made economically viable, nor were environmental targets being met.

"We continue to see more species and ecological communities threatened with extinction," Ms Goodwin said. "We're not heading in the right direction."

"We want a full independent review of [the agreements], and want options for state forests, and only then will we be willing to participate" in talks, she said.

The public can make submissions up to 12 March.



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