



Tasmanian
Forest
Products
Association

Submission to:

Inquiry into the Environment Protection and
Biodiversity Conservation Amendment
(Reconsideration of Decisions) Bill 2024



October 2024

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
c/o Committee Secretary Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600
Email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

About Tasmanian Forest Products Association

The Tasmanian Forest Products Association (TFPA) welcomes the opportunity to make comment to the Inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Reconsideration of Decisions) Bill 2024.

The TFPA is the peak body for forestry that undertakes policy development, lobbying and advocacy for members interests. TFPA represents all elements of the value chain from the sustainable harvesting of plantations and multiple use natural forest resource including forest establishment and management, harvesting and haulage, processing of timber resources and manufacture of pulp, paper and bioproducts.

Submission to the Inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Reconsideration of Decisions) Bill 2024

The TFPA supports the proposed Bill which amends the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) through the introduction of limitations on timeframes permissible for reconsideration of decisions, and on those who may seek reconsideration after a period of three years.

The TFPA notes that the recent decision to rescind an environmental approval in Tasmania after 11 years must send a concerning signal to the investment market.

The proposed changes in the Bill will substantially improve regulatory certainty for investors in projects that require environmental approvals, increase investment overall and directly assist the government's efforts to promote expansion of, and investment in, the plantation forestry sector.

Timber supply for the future

Australia's national plantation estate has fallen by 230,000 hectares from 1.973 million hectares in 2014-15 to 1.744 million hectares in 2020-21.

Political decisions, particularly in Victoria and Western Australia, have also reduced hardwood timber supplies and put jobs, businesses and in some cases whole towns at risk.

With less timber being harvested in Australia, but demand for timber products continuing to rise, these decisions will create challenges for the government's lofty house building goals.

Growing, diversifying and securing Australia's sustainable forest industries will be essential to meeting Australia's fibre needs, as well as contributing to the global climate change solutions.

Actions that increase the uncertainty within the regulatory environment can only reduce the availability investment capital in our forestry businesses, not least in medium to long term investment.

Regional Forest Agreements

The TFPA also notes the government's commitment to bring Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) within the scope of the EPBC Act.

It is important to note that RFAs are not a 'loophole' in the regulatory environment, but an alternative way to meet the same regulatory requirements.

This was demonstrated on 10 January 2024 when the Federal Court dismissed a challenge by the Northeast Forestry Alliance on the validity of the NSW Northeast Regional Forestry Agreement.

A key objective of RFAs was to give the native forest harvesting sector a level of regulatory certainty while fully addressing biodiversity needs.

The introduction into the EPBC Act of limitations on timeframes permissible for reconsideration of decisions, and on those who may seek reconsideration after a period of three years would at least limit the scope for vexatious legal disputation although at the cost of the formal cooperation of state and federal governments and processes for regular reviews (recognising that RFAs would cease to be operative).

Thank you for providing the TFPA with the opportunity to provide this submission. If you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact Nick Steel, TFPA Chief Executive Officer via email



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TFPA is the peak industry body representing the forestry products value chain in Tasmania from those growing, managing and harvesting our sustainable plantations and multiple use natural forests to the primary and secondary processing of timber, the manufacture of pulp and paper, and the value-added timber and pulp and paper products supply chains.