

McKinnells Pty Ltd

NHVAS
Accreditation No.
V01534

ABN 71 050 236 630

PO Box 773
EDEN NSW 2551

☎ 02 6496 4550

21st February, 2018

McKinnells Pty Ltd Submission to the Ten and Fifteen-year reviews of the Eden and Southern Regional Forest Agreements

McKinnells Pty Ltd is a third-generation Company working in the timber industry and our future remains there.

The principles underpinning the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) were extensively researched and consulted on which established a framework for the management of forests in the RFA regions. Areas and regions that the parties believed were required for the purposes of a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system were identified and provide for the conservation of those area. They provide for the ecologically sustainable management and use of forested areas in the regions and provide long-term stability of forests and forest industries.

McKinnells Pty Ltd agrees with and supports these principles. We believe that because of pressure from minority groups for more and more reserve areas that the RFA have failed to provide long-term stability of forests and forest industries.

McKinnells Pty Ltd is very concerned that once areas are locked up in National Parks and Reserves, these areas are not being ecologically sustainably managed, they are let over grow with noxious weeds like Blackberry and such, and thick growth restricting the growth of the forest and this is, in our opinion, a disaster waiting to happen. Once a wild fire gets started in any of these areas then not only are human lives at risk but millions of species of flora and fauna are threatened. Just remember the effects of the 2003 and 2007 fires in the alpine areas.

The 2003/2007 events clearly demonstrated that all forest age classes can be equally affected across virtually all elevation and aspect ranges. Total destruction, and if we continue to lose this amount of forest and parks in wildfires does not stand well with us.

Since the RFA's were put in place, areas such as Murrah/Mumbulla were added to the reserve system and no offset to the timber industry for the loss of this extra working area being removed from production. Originally industry asked for a wood reserve area to be gazetted to allow for land swap type outcomes but this was refused. WE believe this should be again addressed in light of the changes to these extra areas being taken and tied up in reserves.

The argument from opponents will suggest that forests are being destroyed by the timber industry, but there have been areas sought by conservation groups to be placed in the reserve system because of their pristine nature, only for it to be revealed that the area had in fact been harvested for the timber industry many years before. Just proof of the forest regeneration after harvesting. •

The forest industry is not a dying industry and by continued sustainable management under the RFA system will allow the industry to remain viable and continue well into the future. On the 7th November 2017 a report released by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) stated that "Australia's forestry sector is continuing to enjoy some of the best conditions in its history". It goes on to say that "ABARES Executive Director, Steve Hatfield-Dodds, said the report, *Australian forest and wood products statistics: March and June quarters 2017*, showed the industry is now in its fourth consecutive year of growth."

The report goes on to say "In 2016-2017, the volume of logs harvested is estimated to have reached record levels, increasing 9 per cent on the year prior, to nearly 33 million cubic metres." Dr Hatfield-Dodds also said "The value of total logs harvested was up nearly 12 per cent to \$2.5 billion, reflecting increased estimated softwood log prices and softer hardwood log prices.

In Conclusion

McKinnells Pty Ltd employees 27 people and utilise many support industries in the Eden Region and the life of the RFA to date has achieved the outcomes for a sustainable industry.

Small changes should be addressed as mentioned but no more areas of the working forest allocation need to be removed, in fact consideration should be given to selective harvesting in some National Parks and Reserve area, for example the South East Forest National Park – a large area of this National Park had previously been working forest and when this was set aside by the then Premier of NSW, Bob Carr there was no trade-off, just a look up the forest mentality. Unfortunately, too often the forest industry has been used as a political tool.

These areas need to be reviewed in light of climate change and the threat of more extreme weather conditions such as wildfire and the damage to the area they were trying to conserve.

Fine tuning the current RFA by removing terminology relating to what will be done and that has been done doesn't need to be continually retained once achieved and can probably be strengthened in structure to better serve the competing demands of forest-based policy and more access for the community for them to better understand achievements of the RFA as they happen.

Too many small communities have suffered, and still suffer with loss or lack of working forest areas availability, the negative social impacts following cutbacks to the native forest industry can be ongoing for years, usually the promised tourism replacement jobs have not eventuated.

National Parks and Reserve areas need more monitoring to be sure of their flora and fauna with suggested five yearly reporting coinciding with the RFA reviews.

McKinnells Pty Ltd support the continuation of the Regional Forest Agreements and the 5-yearly review structure.

