

29/6/19

Dear Minister,

Today, I am particularly concerned about the renewal of the obsolete West Victorian Regional Forest Agreement (Western RFA).

The Western RFA is out of date, unnecessary and ecologically-damaging – and it should not be renewed. Having recently watched the 4 Corners program titled ‘Extinction Nation’ the fight to save Australia's endangered species could not be more important. Australia boasts a stunning array of unique wildlife. They feature on our coat of arms and they're placed front and centre in our tourism campaigns. But the reality is, many of our native animals are in danger. The renewal of the Western RFA will mean much of our native fauna will continue to be put at risk. Australia has one of the worst extinction rates on the planet and the problem is growing. There are currently more than 500 animal species under threat. There is heated debate over who is responsible and what lengths governments should go to, to save these threatened species; however, I believe the Western RFA is responsible and plays a significant part in exacerbating the extinction crisis.

The Western RFA covers a huge area from Melbourne to the South Australian border and is rich in threatened species and endangered habitats which should be protected. The west is already fragmented landscape containing some of the most cleared ecosystems in the whole state – there is hardly any native forest left to log. The habitats of many of our most vulnerable and endangered native species are at risk through logging of native

forest. This is not even about jobs. There is very little native forestry industry remaining in the west. In fact, total state government revenue from western native forest logging is only \$700,000 per year, even less if you subtract government subsidies. But that doesn't seem to be halting plans to lock in special deals and to continue to log important parts of what remains. **The Western RFA is based on a false premise, is obsolete, and should be cancelled because:**

1. There is little native forestry industry left in the west;
2. It was originally set up due to the export of woodchips, but there is no longer native forest export from the west of the state;
3. It is largely state-funded and unprofitable;
4. Independent reviews have recommended for the Western RFA to be cancelled;
5. It is ecologically- damaging and has delivered little to protect native forests since its inception, despite the promise that it would do so;
6. There are still significant gaps in the protected area and reserve system in western Victoria;
7. The west is an area rich in threatened species and endangered habitats which should be protected.

The Western RFA is now out of date, and it is unnecessary, disproportionate and damaging to renew such an agreement where the economic and ecological context has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. Yet the state and federal governments are planning to renew the agreement and expand it to cover not just native forest but also plantations. I hope that as climate change puts even more pressure on native forests because of drought and bushfires causing further destruction and fragmentation of habitat for native animals, the government can

see the importance of protecting our precious native fauna by **not renewing the Western Regional Forestry Agreement.**

Yours Sincerely,

