



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

Ref: MC23-008517

Ms Bronwyn Davies
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Dear Ms Davies

Thank you for your email of 14 July 2023 to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon Murray Watt, requesting a meeting to get his views on native forest harvesting. Minister Watt has asked me to thank you for your correspondence and to reply on his behalf.

Native forests make an important contribution to Australia's environment, carbon stores, and in reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory reported that overall, Australia's production native forests were a net sink of carbon dioxide – sequestering 35.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2020, with sequestration from regrowth significantly exceeding emissions from harvesting.

Although 87 per cent of the wood produced in Australia comes from plantations, Australia's plantation estate is not able to replace the type and quality of wood produced from our native forests. For example, native forests are the main source of eucalypt sawlogs and veneer logs which are aged between 50 and 80 years. These provide hard, durable, appearance grade timber suitable for flooring, furniture, cabinetry and architectural uses. Very few hardwood plantations can produce timber of this age or quality economically.

For the above reasons, the Australian Government remains supportive of a sustainable native forest industry. Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) with relevant state governments provide for multiple sustainable outcomes, including the conservation and protection of native flora and fauna through expanded reserve systems, and implementing prescriptions for managing a wide range of environmental values, including threatened species. RFAs were instrumental in the expansion of forest reserves – almost doubling the area of native forests in conservation reserves from 5.4 million hectares before the RFAs were signed (1997-2001) to about 10 million hectares in 2019.

As part of the government's commitment to a sustainable forestry industry, over \$300 million is being invested to expand plantations and modernise our timber manufacturing infrastructure. This includes a \$73.8 million program to establish new plantations to secure Australia's domestic wood supply.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to the Government's attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Julie Gaglia'.

Julie Gaglia
24 / 07 / 2023