

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 4
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)
Topic: Regional Forest Agreements
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 19 February 2016
Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart asked:

Has any Commonwealth Government agency examined the effectiveness of the Regional Forest Agreements in maintaining the Commonwealth's own environmental standards, including whether the protection offered to threatened species under the RFAs is equivalent to that offered under the EPBC Act?

Answer:

When regional forest agreements (RFAs) were created, key areas within RFA regions were set aside to establish comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve systems to provide for the protection of biodiversity, old-growth forests and wilderness. Other areas were identified as potentially being available for harvesting. In these areas, state governments have responsibility for forestry operations and ensuring they are conducted in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management. RFAs provide an adaptive management framework that enables forestry operations to be undertaken in accordance with species recovery plans approved under the EPBC Act.

The performance of RFAs are reviewed by the Australian and relevant state governments through five-yearly review processes, which include an opportunity for public comment. A reviewer is appointed to review the implementation of commitments within the RFAs, the results of monitoring of sustainability indicators, as well as public comments. The reviewers reports are published and tabled in parliament.