



tasmanian conservation trust inc

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Minister Garrett caves into forest industry and state governments over EPBC review

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust is deeply disappointed in Environment Minister, Peter Garrett's, decision today to reject recommendations made by the 'Report of the Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999' (EPBC) in relation to the forest management and Regional Forest Agreements (RFA).

"The recommendations made by the independent reviewer, Dr Allan Hawke, in relation to forest management and RFAs is not radical or restrictive on the forest industry and Minister Garrett should not have dismissed them so conclusively and hastily," said TCT Director, Peter McGlone.

"Under the system proposed by Dr Hawkes, the EPBC Act would only apply over forestry operations if the forestry industry failed to demonstrate rigorous independent auditing and reporting and failed to meet basic levels of environmental performance.

"Dr Hawkes' recommendations, if applied, would simply ensure the forest industry actually demonstrated to the Australian Government and general public their claims of sustainability and environmental protection are factual and can be believed.

"If the forest industry and state governments believed the forest industry is sustainable and protects the environment, they should have welcomed Dr Hawke's recommendation.

"Minister Garrett's rejection of Dr Hawkes' recommendations confirms our suspicions that the forest industry is afraid of independent reviews of their performance and Minister Garrett is afraid to take them on.

"Unless Minister Garrett changes his position regarding the review of the EPBC Act, many forest dependent endangered species such as the swift parrot will continue to lose critical habitat to logging and will slide closer to extinction."

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Recommendation 38 of Dr Hawke's Report suggests the Act be amended to allow the Environment Minister to apply the full protection of the EPBC Act if a RFA review:

- fails to meet specified timeframes;
- does not provide sufficient information to measure environmental performance; and
- indicates serious non-performance, such as failure to:
 - implement and maintain forestry codes of practices
 - commit to and implement recovery plans for threatened species
 - establish management plans for reserves
 - investigate alleged breaches of the RFA
 - audit outcomes are not implemented

Minister Garrett did not reject recommendation 39, which also relates to RFAs, however this would make no difference without also implementing recommendation 38.

"Previous RFA reviews have identified numerous breaches of the RFA and made numerous recommendations for improvements to forest management and all have been ignored. Without the threat of sanctions for non-compliance we will continue to see bad forest management get the stamp of approval by the Australian and state governments," Mr McGlone concluded.

Further Information:

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