



**Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston**  
**Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources**

**M E D I A   R E L E A S E**

**Regional Forest Agreements provide for sustainable forest management**

**\*\* Under embargo 12:00am 27 March 2018 \*\***

Victoria's forest industry jobs and the environment have been assured certainty with the Australian and Victorian governments extending the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) for East Gippsland, Central Highlands and the North East regions.

The extension of the three RFAs, signed yesterday by Prime Minister Turnbull and Premier Andrews, will bring them in line with the two other Victorian RFAs, West Victoria and Gippsland—with all five RFAs effective to 31 March 2020.

This will allow the Australian and Victorian governments to deliver the long-term extension to all five RFAs as one package.

Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Anne Ruston, welcomed the extensions, saying RFAs are the right framework for the sustainable management of Australia's native forests.

"The signing demonstrates our governments shared interest in an ongoing native timber industry and the jobs and economic prosperity it creates," Minister Ruston said.

"The Australian Government remains committed to rolling 20-year extensions for all RFAs.

"RFAs provide for sustainable forest management, certainty of access to resources for industry, and a comprehensive conservation reserve network.

"We are working together to make RFAs more adaptive, robust, simpler and more transparent, so that they reflect contemporary forest practices and community expectations.

"The Victorian forestry industry directly employs 21,826 people, with a further 48,000 estimated indirect jobs across the value chain – it is integral to Victoria's regional economies.

"Victorian native forests produce high quality, appearance grade timber and the RFAs ensure this is done sustainably.

“When the Victorian RFAs were first signed, 955,000 hectares of forest was put into conservation reserves.”

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