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Critical new information shows there is no justification for a renewal of the RFA:

Environment sector urges McGowan to scrap Morrison's plan to trash forests

MEDIA RELEASE

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As the clock ticks to the Federal election, conservationists are urging Premier McGowan not to sign a 20-year logging agreement with PM Scott Morrison.

WA's 20-year Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) was signed in 1999 to provide resource security to the timber industry by removing the requirement for logging plans to be assessed under Federal environmental law. It expires on the 4th of May.

Conservation groups have written to the Premier to draw his attention to critical new information that shows there is no justification for a renewal of the RFA.

New Report Exposes Extinction Threat

"A national report released by The Wilderness Society yesterday, *Abandoned – Australia's Forest Wildlife in Crisis*,¹ reveals that WA's Western Ringtail Possum is one of four forest-dependent species that are on the list of Australia's mammals most likely to become extinct in the next 20 years.

"Slash and burn logging continues in Western Ringtail Possum habitat even while the scientists are saying that every piece of habitat is critical to their survival.

"At this rate, Western Ringtail Possums are going to be extinct within 20 years. This is a serious failure of policy and law.

"Cockatoos, Numbats, Quokkas, Chuditch and other unique WA wildlife are also losing forest habitat and being pushed closer to extinction while the Federal Government looks the other way, flouting its international responsibilities to protect matters of national environment significance.

"Logging is the only industry in Australia that has severe impacts on wildlife and biodiversity but enjoys a special exemption from the Federal *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.*

Native forest logging industry collapse

"Brickworks Limited, which owns Auswest Timbers, has announced it made a \$4 million loss last year and is selling its WA interests and getting out of the industry².

"Forest Products Commission's 2015 contracts of sale show that Auswest is contracted to buy approximately 85% of all karri sawlogs and 55% of all jarrah sawlogs sold by the State each year, so this is a major blow to an already unprofitable and deeply unpopular industry.

¹ <https://www.wilderness.org.au/images/resources/Abandoned.pdf>

² <https://www.asx.com.au/asxpdf/20190321/pdf/443njfnthqz9b1.pdf> and <https://www.asx.com.au/asxpdf/20190321/pdf/443nxk0d7ptpj8.pdf>

“Meanwhile, Nannup Timber Processing, the Government’s second biggest sawlog customer, hasn’t been able to secure investment needed for a mill expansion and isn’t going ahead with developing a native timber peeling facility in spite of an offer of a \$22 million grant from the Federal government.

“The letter also points out that the native forest logging industry employs fewer than 500 people and last year the WA Government’s Forest Products Commission acknowledged that we the public make 1 cent actual income from every dollar ‘generated’ from logging our magnificent forests.

“Summary of audited key performance indicators”

Status	Actual
New	6. Cost per dollar of revenue generated
	Native forest
	Plantations
	Sandalwood

<http://annualreport2018.fpc.wa.gov.au/summary-audited-key-performance-indicators>

Australian Labor Party commits to thorough scientific reviews

Conservation groups are recommending that the McGowan Government initiate a full scientific review similar to that promised by Australian Labor, and recently initiated by the Victorian State Government, to bring WA’s climate and biodiversity science up to date.

“The past 20 years have seen profound changes in the climate. It would be totally irresponsible to renew a long-term agreement with forest health and climate change implications based on a 1990s understanding of climate change,” she said.

“Forest management has completely failed to keep up with climate and biodiversity science. The latest review of the WA Forest Management Plan exposed the fact that State agencies are ignoring scientific evidence of impacts of logging on forest health and wildlife and that they are failing to do their own scientific assessments.

“Forests are playing a vital role in capturing and storing carbon. The science shows that old trees and intact forests store, and continue to capture, more carbon from the atmosphere than young regrowth trees and that protecting natural forests is among our best tools for combatting dangerous climate change.

“We also know that deforestation has contributed significantly to the reduction in rainfall in the South West,” she said.

Forests For Life Plan would deliver conservation objectives, jobs and industry development

“We are working with industry and community groups in the South West on a clearly articulated transition plan for the industry. It will create 860 – 940 jobs in the industry and deliver multiple biodiversity, climate and landcare benefits while supporting farmers. This is the future of the industry.

“The expiry of the 20-year RFA is an excellent opportunity for the WA Government to bring forest management into the 21st Century,” said Ms Beckerling.

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