



Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef
Minister for Science and Innovation

Our Ref: CTS 15888/24
Your Ref: A1336971

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19 SEP 2024

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 26 August 2024 enclosing a copy of Parliamentary Petition No. 4101-24 concerning Deongwar State Forest and the South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement.

The Queensland Government is heavily invested in the protection of our unique biodiversity and is committed to growing our protected area estate. This commitment is driven by the *Queensland Protected Area Strategy 2020-2030* (the Strategy), released in 2020, which establishes the strategic direction for the State's terrestrial protected areas, both public and private. Through the 2022-23 State Budget, the Government committed \$262.5 million over four years to continue implementing the Strategy, the single largest allocation of funds to expand and manage Queensland's public protected area estate. In 2023-24, the protected area system increased by about 377,334 hectares to cover 8.6 per cent of the State's land area.

The Strategy includes the strategic priority to sustainably grow protected areas, with a focus on representativeness, biodiversity conservation, cultural values, connectivity and climate change resilience. Government agencies, led by the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (the department), are working to identify areas of highest conservation value for transfer to protected area. Assessment of areas suitable for conversion, targets regional ecosystems that are under-represented in the protected area estate, provide critical habitat values to threatened species and/or enhance connectivity of existing protected areas and ecosystems.

A key action currently being delivered is the conversion of up to 20,000 hectares of forestry land into the protected area estate in the South East Queensland Regional Planning Area. Native hardwood logging will also cease in all parts of the former South East Queensland Forests Agreement (SEQFA) area (i.e. the greater South East Queensland Bioregion) by the end of 2026. All remaining areas of State forest in South East Queensland are being assessed for the contribution they can make to an expanded protected area estate, while allowing public access for low-impact recreational activities.

In late 2023, 2,550 hectares of State forest within this region was transferred to protected area status. On 20 August 2024, the Legislative Assembly agreed to a resolution to transfer a further 10,857 hectares in this region to protected area status. A third tranche of State forest transfers is being prepared in order to deliver the 20,000 hectare commitment for conversion to protected area estate, including parts of Deongwar State forest.

On 26 June 2024, the Honourable Steven Miles MP, Premier announced the 30-year Queensland Sustainable Timber Industry Framework (the Framework). The Framework will be backed by a \$200 million package to support the future of the timber industry, securing timber jobs and timber supply while protecting high value ecosystems and threatened species, such as the greater glider. The Framework includes six priority areas that the Queensland Government will develop in partnership with stakeholders. This includes a commitment to work with stakeholders to add to the protected area estate and determine appropriate tenures in other areas where native timber harvest has ended or is planned to end. The Terms of Reference for the Framework can be accessed via the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's website:

<https://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/publications/categories/plans/assets/sustainable-timber-tor-doc.pdf>.

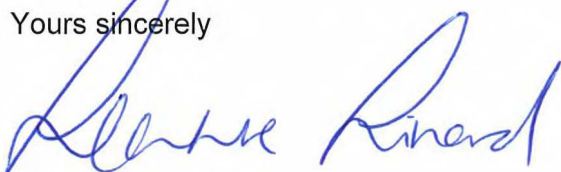
The Premier's announcement regarding the Framework indicated that areas of high conservation value across the Eastern Hardwoods timber supply zone (i.e. the former SEQFA area outside of the South East Queensland Regional Planning Area) will be identified for early transfer to protected area. These areas, and the processes for transfer, are now being finalised via a cross-government Interdepartmental Committee.

On 31 August 2024, I jointly announced the Government's intention to establish a Greater Glider Forest Park as the first key deliverable under the Framework, by formally protecting 54,000 hectares of greater glider habitat in South East Queensland. It is the intention that these areas of State forest, that are key greater glider habitat, be transitioned to a new natural capital reserve tenure, which will prohibit native hardwood logging, prior to their assessment for further protection.

While the focus of this work is currently on South East Queensland, where native hardwood logging is set to end over coming years, the Framework will also include a comprehensive Statewide assessment of biodiversity values. This comprehensive Statewide assessment will establish best management of native forests and support decision-making as well as identifying areas that are critical for formal protection.

I trust that this information has been of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely



Leanne Linard MP

**Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and
Minister for Science and Innovation**