

## **Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria**

### **Environment and Planning Committee**

Dear Environment and Planning Committee,  
REFERENCE: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline.

My name is Bruce Hyatt and I live [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] in the Central Highlands.

My father and grandfather were both loggers in the 1930's and 40's. My father left the logging industry in the 1950's due to lack of viable timber available post the 1939 fires and heavy logging which had taken out most of mature trees in the Royston Range and Snobs Creek valley. Trees that were young in those days and not destroyed by the 1939 fires and logging are now mature trees around 80 years old, some older. This forest area is now being decimated by VicForest to fulfil orders for hardwood timber which is mainly turned into the following:-

**60% of the forest cut down is left on the forest floor as it is not suitable to be used for anything.**  
**Paper - 80% of all timber removed from the forest is destined for paper or pulp for export**  
**Pallets - 11% made by Dormitt (Chep Pallets)**  
**Millable timber - 5% for building with only 3% making its way to the consumers**  
**Firewood - 4%**

I live in the **Shire of Murrindindi** which supports VicForest due to the small number of workers employed in the forestry industry. There is a small group known as the Rubicon Forest Protection Group (which I am a member) that is opposed to the current industrial scale logging practices of Vicforest.

The Council of Murrindindi support VicForest and their actions due to the small number of local people employed by the forestry industry.

### **My Experience**

My experience is with my father and his opinion of the forest when he left the logging industry in the 1950's and he stating the forest in our area should not be logged for at least 100 years. This area once had at least 10 sawmills operating. The timber was not transported out of the area and sustained a large local workforce. The majority of timber was made into building materials.

Now 90% of building material is softwood, grown in plantations  
All timber taken out of the Central Highlands is transported out of the area creating very little work for locals

### **Why do you care about it?**

I care about it as the current logging is decimating our area, swathes of coupes can be seen quite visibly from any road or highway where the Central Highlands can be seen. It is much worse seeing the destruction from the air. The Central Highlands now resemble a patchwork quilt running from north to the south in Gippsland

I would like to stop logging of native Victorian forests as soon as possible and have them replaced by plantations both hardwood and softwood.

### **Our shared future**

My thoughts for the future is to protect all of our native forest, as soon as possible.

There should be an independent Department that oversees VicForest activities. Currently VicForest is in charge of its own actions. DELWP have proven they are not capable of enforcing laws appropriate

to VicForest noncompliance of logging areas where they were not supposed to log or logging outside their coupe boundaries

### **Suggested actions for the Victorian state government to take**

1. The devastation inflicted on our wildlife and forests from the 2019 - 2020 bushfires has made forest protection and a rapid logging transition more urgent. The Victorian state government's commitment to a 2030 industry transition must be brought forward. Two immediate priorities are protection of unburnt Greater Glider habitat, and a continued moratorium on logging in East Gippsland.
2. There are opportunities for the state government to protect forests for all Victorians to enjoy now and into the future. Two community led initiatives are the proposed Great Forest National Park and Emerald Link conservation economy proposal.
3. In the face of climate catastrophe, Victoria's forests play a critical role in removing carbon pollution from the air we all breathe, nourishing us with clean air and safe, clean drinking water. The Victorian state government must develop carbon accounting and policies that include forests.
4. The state government must urgently implement and properly resource Action Statements (plans for recovery) for all threatened plants and wildlife. Victoria's plants and wildlife are at risk, with over 2000 recognised as threatened with extinction however only 15% have Action Statements.
5. The rights and interests of Traditional Custodians should be recognised in all aspects of land and water management, as well as decision-making in relation to their traditional lands, including traditional management practices such as cultural fire. First Nations - declining ecosystems have profound implications for First Nations.
6. Victoria needs a new, independent, well-resourced conservation regulator to police deforestation and other destructive industries. The EPA is the independent watchdog for pollution, but currently there is no independent watchdog to ensure industries comply with environmental laws, with numerous breaches to laws continuing to occur and a long history of regulators turning a blind eye.
7. Community rights must be guaranteed when governments are making environmental decisions, including the right to participate, the right to access necessary information, the right to challenge environmental decisions and the right to transparency in government decision making.

"I agree to this submission being made public"

**BRUCE HYATT**

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