



REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT JOINT ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY REPORT: WESTERN REGION

Cloud
Catcher

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report has been independently produced by Cloud Catcher.

In June 2019, as part of a broader program of engagement on Regional Forest Agreements, the Australian and Victorian governments ran a series of public consultation and engagement events - independently facilitated by Cloud Catcher. Following the events, we have produced six summary reports – one for each of the five Victorian RFA regions and one for Melbourne, where the engagements applied to all Victorian RFA regions. These reports offer a summary of the key themes and messages we heard along with a full set of the transcribed data gathered at the events. They have been produced soon after the engagement events took place, to assist with the transparency of this process.

Public consultation for this phase of engagement has now closed. For more information on the Regional Forest Agreement engagement process contact: future.rfa@delwp.vic.gov.au or see: <https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/futureforests>

For more on Cloud Catcher see: www.cloudcatcher.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of land and water. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Victorian Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life.

CONTEXT

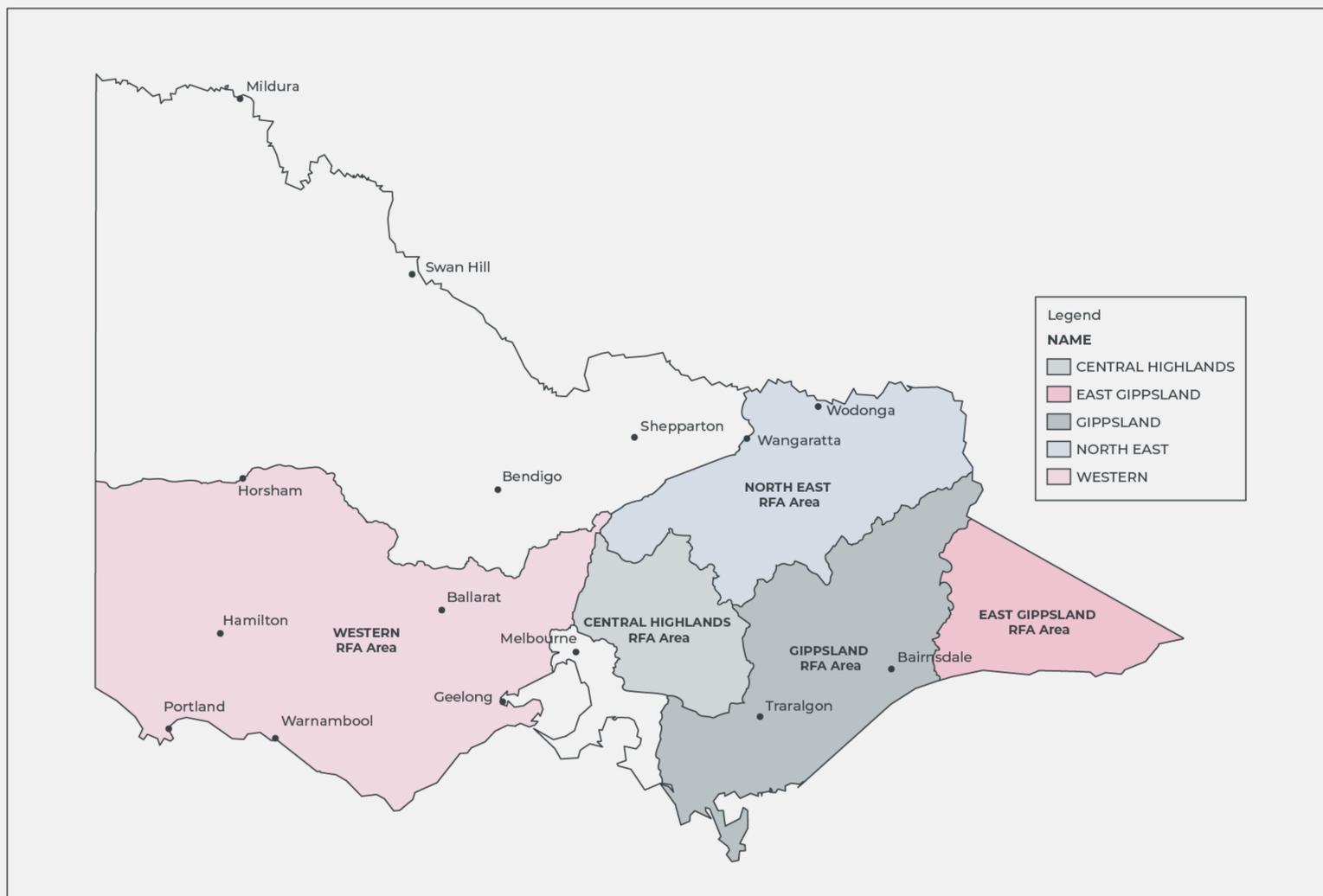
In instigating this engagement process on the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements, the Victorian and Australian governments have acknowledged the significant changes that have occurred since the RFAs were first signed 20 years ago, including the impacts of climate change, extreme weather events (including drought and bushfires), scientific and technological progress, advances in our understanding of forests and ecosystems, changing forest-based industries and opportunities, and the recognition of the rights of Victoria's Traditional Owners to partner in land management and seek economic and cultural opportunities.

In that context, the way we manage and make decisions about forests is of critical importance – for our natural environments, for our economies and for the future of our society more generally.

BACKGROUND

About the Victorian regional forest agreements

There are currently five Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) between the State of Victoria and the Commonwealth of Australia. In place until 31 March 2020, the RFAs stated aim is to establish a framework for the provision of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system, ecologically sustainable management and use of forests, and the long-term stability of forests and forest industries within five Victorian RFA regions.



About the joint Australian and Victorian government RFA engagement

The Victorian and Australian Governments agreed to work towards the modernisation and extension of the five Victorian RFAs before their expiry on 31 March 2020. This process is intended to reflect changes that have occurred in the 20 years since RFAs were first established. An Independent Consultation Paper produced by Dr William Jackson¹ provided an overview of the performance of the RFAs to date, identified key areas for improvement, and posed a series of overarching questions. Those questions formed the basis for public consultation and engagement with Victorian communities.

The public consultation involved:

- A two-month online survey and public submission period via Engage Victoria
- A series of face-to-face engagement events - drop-in sessions, workshops and one-on-one meetings held across each of the five Victorian RFA Regions

The Victorian and Australian Government jointly undertook face-to-face engagement with Victorian stakeholders and communities in June 2019 to obtain feedback on potential improvements to the Victorian RFAs, to inform the modernisation process. This series of Summary Reports provides a summary of the feedback received during the face-to-face consultation and engagement events only. Feedback collected through all RFA consultation activities - including the online survey and public submissions along with findings from the contemporary assessments of forest values - will inform the modernisation of the RFAs.

1. <https://engage.vic.gov.au/future-of-our-forests/rfa-consultation-paper>

OUR ROLE

Cloud Catcher provided independent facilitation for the face-to-face engagement events - community drop-in sessions, workshops and one-on-one meetings. Our role was to create a context wherein community members could have their questions answered and State and Commonwealth government representatives could listen deeply to their views.

We see our independence as important, particularly on a topic with significant community passion which involves two levels of government. To ensure community views are taken into account during government decision-making, we need opportunities for members of the public to have their say and to be heard.

WHO WE ARE

CLOUD CATCHER

Facilitation for a fair & flourishing future

- We understand the power of great facilitation and meaningful moments for creating change. We have worked with people across all sectors and in many different contexts. This includes environmental groups and political organisations, local, state and Federal government agencies and a range of industries in the private sector.
- We acknowledge that the issues we face are intersectional and systemic. This stuff runs deep. And wide. It's not just the actions of 'bad people' that lead to bad outcomes; most people in bad systems will tend to make unhealthy choices. As far as possible, we aim our work at those systemic roots - in the way we work, the projects we accept and the relationships we cultivate.

Facilitators and report authors: Matt Wicking, Lina Patel, Tom Henderson

OVERVIEW

The topic of forest management is complex and is deeply important to many and diverse communities across the state. After all, people's livelihoods and precious places, identities and hometowns, cultures and futures are all in the mix when we talk about forests and the way they are managed.

This is one of six Summary Reports produced independently by Cloud Catcher to present the key messages government representatives received as we travelled with them across Victoria. If you were to read all comments in all six reports, you would see some consistent themes coming through. One such theme was a notable sense of distrust in the process of decision-making around forest management. It was common for people to call for more accountability, reliability and transparency in the way the RFAs and Victoria's forests are managed. People wanted parties to the RFA to be held to what is agreed and repercussions if outcomes are not met. Many participants also called for more science-based decision making and for RFAs to be more adaptable, particularly in the face of growing issues such as climate change and fire, which pose new and significant large-scale threats to communities, natural places and livelihoods.

Input came from a diverse range of voices - community members and recreational forest users, tourism industry representatives, environmental groups, local government, water and catchment management authorities, timber industry, apiculture and other commercial forest users. Accordingly, ideas for improvement to the existing model were diverse. They included: moving away from clear-felling in native forests; supporting the transition to plantation timbers and alternative fibre; supporting other forest-based and adjacent industries and activities including apiculture, forest-based tourism and hunting to manage invasive animal populations - and much more. Across the state many environmental groups called for the cancellation of the Regional Forest Agreements altogether - or for very significant modifications. Similarly consistently, the strongest sentiment that came up from the timber industry, regardless of location, was a desire for greater stability and certainty.

To better understand how these and many other perspectives played out in this particular region, read on below. For other regions, see the relevant Summary Report. For more information, go to:
<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/futureforests>
or contact: future.rfa@delwp.vic.gov.au

OUR APPROACH

Our approach has been to take the transcribed session outputs – over 3,000 opinions and comments from community members and stakeholders – and to synthesise and summarise them to identify key topics under three main consultation themes. The main section of this report represents those topics in order of how common they were at events across this region. And Appendix B contains the raw data as it was shared by community members and stakeholders.

We make no recommendations here. We have attempted to reflect the main opinions and attitudes from each region as clearly and plainly as possible. In some cases, directly opposing views of reality were held by different groups in the same region. By including them here, we're reporting other people's opinions and their perspectives on their lived experience, not making a judgement as to whether people's ideas are accurate.

The events that this report is based on are only one part of a larger engagement process. Our understanding is that the same event outputs we have reviewed will be collated along with online submissions and survey responses as part of the broader synthesis to be used for decision-making and policy development purposes. We have no involvement with feedback collected via online survey and submissions through Engage Victoria and no influence over the way this or any other data is used.

WESTERN REGION SUMMARY

WESTERN REGION

Below is a summary of the views and opinions gathered at events held in the western RFA region.

Events held in this region included a workshop in Daylesford for Environmental NGOs (ENGOS), drop-in sessions at Beaufort and Forrest for the general public, a series of one-on-one conversations in Geelong with ENGOS, local government and timber industry, and an additional drop-in session in Geelong for members of the general public. For a full list of events by each region, along with attendee numbers, see Appendix A.

All sessions were framed around a set of three broad questions:

1. What changes have you seen in the region?
2. What should the Victorian RFAs aim to achieve over the next 20 years?
3. What are the potential improvements you think should be made?

This small selection of quotes from the West region provides a sense of some of the ideas shared through this process. For the full list of community feedback for this region, see Appendix B.

- “Cancel the Western and Otway RFA”
- “If there is broad opposition, will the RFAs be renewed?”
- “Sustainable yields have to take account of the climate changes. Not just increased bushfire risks but also broader change to the natural ecosystem (e.g. impact of changes to the number of frost days, changes to species populations.”
- “The RFA needs (if it is to continue) to build in accounting for the factors of climate change, bushfires and other large scale disturbances. And in this RFA not permit further disturbances while the forest recovers from these disturbances.”

In each section below, topics that we heard in response to these questions are listed in order of their frequency. Those that appear first in each bullet list were most commonly captured on reporting templates at events. Those that appear later were less common.

CHANGES IN THE REGION

Participants were asked to share what changes they have seen in their region in the 20 years since the previous RFAs were signed. For this region, some of the most common experiences shared were:

- Industry has experienced uncertainty associated with loss of volume and a lack of government commitment.
- Government incentives, such as Managed Investment Schemes and carbon accounting rules, have not provided stability and certainty for the timber industry.
- Protection of areas is leading to poor forest management.
- Closure of industrial logging means better jobs but also vulnerability to tourism fluctuations for small towns like Forrest.
- Climate change is impacting on timber species and biodiversity.
- Native forests have declined, there has been a loss of habitat and fragmentation of forests, and a consequential increase in protected areas.

IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE

Participants were asked a series of questions under three key themes to elicit their suggested improvements to the RFAs:

1. Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management
2. Long Term Stability of Forests and Forest Industries
3. Governance and Management of Victoria's Forests.

Participant responses for this region (Appendix B) are summarised below. These are not quotes but summarised lists of topics that arose, in order of their frequency. That means those that appear first in each bullet list tended to be most commonly captured on reporting templates at events. Those that appear later were less common.

Theme 1: Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management

- Cancel the West RFA. If it needs to remain, make it more regionally specific and remove the exemption to the EPBC Act. The community expressed a fear that the West RFA is a way of leaving a door open to the possibility of a return to industrial logging in this area which is now moving towards a different future.
- Ensure greater protection of forested areas and a strengthening of the CAR system. Move towards permanent protection and away from logging native forests. Close gaps in the reserve system to connect protected areas together.
- Increase Traditional Owner engagement. Employ First Nations people in forest management, including activities like cultural burning and fire management.
- Increase care for threatened species and ecosystems. Community members called for addressing the issue of net loss of biodiversity across the landscape. They also wanted forests valued for their water-generating capacity.

Theme 2: Long Term Stability of Forests & Forest Industries

- Transition towards plantation timber.
- Ensure protection of harvest volumes and guaranteed supply with longer planning periods for timber industry security.
- Make greater investment in forest-based tourism.
- Acknowledge and address climate change in long-term planning to account for threatened ecosystems and the effects of bushfires.
- Harvest low volumes of high value timber to produce higher value products locally, shoring up local jobs.
- Invest in jobs related to habitat restoration.
- Investigate new revenue sources for forestry including investment schemes.

Theme 3: Governance & Management of Victoria's Forests

- Increase active management of forested areas, including control of invasive plants and animals.
- Ensure tighter regulation of forest industries.
- Invest in research and development around the state of flora and fauna in forested areas.
- Differing views on fire management practices - from the need to reduce planned burns to the need to increase planned burns to reduce fuel load.
- Undertake more regular reviews to ensure compliance of timber industry.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE

The community opinions represented in this report are taken from the session outputs at the following events throughout June 2019. The number of attendees in the table below is based on the number of people listed on each event's sign-in sheet.

WESTERN VICTORIA				
Date	Activity	Location	Stakeholders Invited	No. of Attendees
3 June	Workshop	Daylesford	Environmental NGOs (ENGOS)	6
3 June	Drop-in session	Beaufort	General public*	20
4 June	Drop-in session	Forrest	General public*	30
4 June	One on ones	Geelong	ENGOS, local government and timber industry	4
29 June	Drop-in session	Geelong	General public*	25
CENTRAL HIGHLANDS				
11 June	Drop-in Session	Healesville	General public*	13
11 June	Workshop	Healesville	ENGOS	9
12 June	Drop-in Session	Powelltown	General public*	18
12 June	Workshop	Powelltown	Timber industry	13
13 June	Drop-in Session	Marysville	General public*	5
13 June	Workshop	Marysville	Local Govt, Water Authorities and CMAs	4
13 June	Workshop	Marysville	ENGOS	2
14 June	Drop-in Session	Alexandra	General public*	27
14 June	Workshop	Alexandra	Timber industry and local government	6

NORTH EAST				
Date	Activity	Location	Stakeholders Invited	No. of Attendees
19 June	Workshop	Benalla	ENGOS and recreation user groups	6
19 June	Workshop	Benalla	Timber industry and other commercial forest users	11
19 June	Drop-in session	Benalla	General public*	7
20 June	Drop-in session	Corryong	General public*	5
20 June	Workshop	Corryong	ENGOS and recreation user groups	5
20 June	Workshop	Corryong	Timber industry and other commercial forest users	8
GIPPSLAND / EAST GIPPSLAND				
24 June	Drop-in Session	Orbost	General public*	9
24 June	Workshop	Orbost	ENGOS	1
24 June	Workshop	Orbost	Timber Industry	11
25 June	Drop-in session	Bairnsdale	General public*	10
25 June	Workshop	Heyfield	Timber Industry	21
26 June	Workshop	Traralgon	Local Govt, Water Authorities and CMAs	13
26 June	Workshop	Traralgon	ENGOS	4
MELBOURNE				
27 June	Workshop	Melbourne	Timber groups	11
27 June	Workshop	Melbourne	ENGOS	5
27 June	Workshop	Melbourne	Recreation and other commercial forest users	14
28 June	One on ones	Melbourne	ENGOS	4
28 June	One on ones	Melbourne	Timber groups	3

* Community members, ENGOS, timber industry, recreation and commercial forest users.

APPENDIX B: WESTERN REGION

Feedback collected through face-to-face engagement was transcribed by DELWP and is being published here in Appendix 2 for reference purposes. All quotes have been transcribed from handwritten notes taken at engagement events that were either directly noted by participants or written by government representatives on behalf of participants. Users should seek appropriate independent professional advice prior to relying on, or entering into any commitment based on material published here. Cloud Catcher does not guarantee, nor accept legal liability arising from or connected to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the comments.

Q1. What changes have you seen in the RFA regions?

Timber volumes have changed from commencement of RFA from 150,000 m ³ to 3,400 m ³
Domestic supply issues e.g. fulfilling Japanese contracts taking priority.
Reduction of habitat and species.
Native forests are in decline.
Export controls.
Wombat Forest - fire hazard of regrowth due to logging.
Continuing decline of biodiversity due to climate change and lack of wildlife corridors.
Attitudes have changed to multi use forestry.
The Beaufort forested area was over cut - this could not go on.
There has been an increase in feral animals.
Box Ironbark forest is more open.
Wombat State Forest no longer has commercial forestry.
Agree the local forest was over utilized in the past.
Areas of Special Protection Zone (SPZ) (example Waterloo forest) can't be managed properly under SPZ rules - the current zoning is detrimental to this forest.
Areas of General Management Zone (GMZ) are under increasing pressure due to more areas being protected under Special Protection Zones (SPZs) or new parks.
Special Protection Zones (SPZs) only work in some instances - such as Powerful Owl.
Loss of habitat trees.
Loss of connectivity between reserves.
Do we need an RFA in West Victoria? Is there a risk that forest operations control will return?
Since the closure of industrial scale timber harvesting local communities have thrived. There are more jobs (better jobs) and there is a better social situation for the town.
More communities could benefit from the timber industry being restructured to a more plantation based industry - but mixed species not mono-culture plantations.
More fire prone regrowth.
Environmental protections not properly addressed in RFA e.g. fragmentation of forests.
Decisions about RFA's should address issue of net loss of ecological values, ecosystem services and biodiversity decline across landscape.

Community expectations have changed and now have better understanding of forestry.
Information in past hasn't been correct (communications and information has improved overtime).
Majority of community are in support of effective forest management.
Industry has decreased overtime e.g. '20-years ago there were 12-13 other sawmills in area, now only one left. But because of community support we are still here.'
More State forests are being converted to National parks (e.g. 'Wombat forests – put pressure on mills same with Otway's).
'Minister in 2014 provided some support to industry with three year licence renewal trial basis (VicForest) but now very little security ahead (2 year licences).'
Less intensive management in West Victoria.
Climate change has impacted on certain timber species.
Job loss over past twenty years hasn't changed much but direction has.
Groundwater pumping in the Otway's has become an issue.
Decline in species surrounding plantations (e.g. crayfish, platypus).
Lack of community engagement.
Small towns are volatile to tourism fluctuations.
Government has been slow in releasing the next 5 year plan.
What has been released will not last the 5 years.
There is uncertainty going into the future to make long-term plans.
We don't have clarify around our regulatory requirements.
Concern about loss of areas for volume.
There hasn't been much government incentive since the managed investment schemes (MIS) system collapsed.
Carbon accounting rules are holding us back. Unless we're putting trees on green field sites, we don't benefit from those rules.
Uncertainty in the native forest sector. What sawmills will exist in 20-30 years time, when they come to maturity.
Drop in incentives since managed investment schemes (MIS) industry collapse.
Introduction of Carbon Accounting Rules, which are limited to agriculture sites and inability to use biomass to offset different sources of energy.
Creation of the new National Park in the Otway's in 2008. Reduction in the area available to selectively harvest timber for high valuing -adding industries.
Establishment of national parks.
Licensing under VicForests, been in operation for 40 years as a business.
Select falling, single tree carried out on backs in small 20kg blocks in wet forest environments.
Fires hotter due to 'locking up' of forests, increased fuel loads and no management.
Longer time between harvest previously and bigger area and more breaks.
Gippsland companies in central highlands - mills closing as not enough resources.
There is no logging in the Otway's.
Water - increased calls on water use, forests vital for water quality and quantity, not sustainable with increased pressures and population growth.
Intergenerational equity.
Increased planned burning and township protection measures.
Increased tourism and associated pressures on fragile environment and traffic management.
Pressure on waterways and water storage.
The Otway's is the water supply for the rapidly expanding Geelong, Surf coast and Bellarine communities. Logging reduces water supply to a thirsty public. Over extraction from the Otway's aquifer to supplement surface water supply is creating major problems now and in the future.

Water collection, storage and use.
Native species declining and feral species introduction (e.g. firetail finches endangered, feral pigs, deer and European wasp).
Increased use by off road vehicles. Is this being monitored? What is the cost associated, with introduced species spread by weeds on vehicles or even Arion after (black slug).
Pest plant and animals need much more investment in management, trail bikes and four-wheeled drivers.
Thriving tourist industry looks like economic success.
In the Otway's, no chainsaws and log trucks is great but pest plant and animals increase, too much cool burning affecting forests around townships. Wombat Forest is still be impacted - with increased tourism without sufficient locations and tracks to spread visitors out.
Forests and wetland health, drying and degrading.
Appreciate no logging, dislike trail bikes, four-wheeled drivers off trackers and to many areas dedicated to mountain bikes.
Big decrease in coastal wetlands.
Worrying decrease of insect numbers.

Q2. What should the Victorian RFAs aim to achieve over the next 20 years?

Prices charged by VicForests for sawlogs differ across the state, is this equitable?
60 cubic metres per year creates 20-30 cubic metre sawn timber. One cubic metre equates to 500 guitars made. In some instances one tree creates 500 guitars, made in Victoria, which has employed 70 people as a family business to produce 10,000 guitars each year at \$6,000 each.
Traditional owner inclusion.
Permanent protection of Special Protection Zones (SPZs).
No net loss of populations in areas that are RFA managed (net gain).
Impacts of climate change need to be recognised.
Gaps in current reserves system.
Move to the Aichi target system from the CAR system.
De-politicise funding.
Address the misuse of strategic prospects.
Valuing process needs to be reassessed.
Be explicit about the implications of climate change on forest systems.
Implement all 11 national policy statements.
Stability and security for timber and forest industry for volume, quality and species.
Doing a good job on sustainability.
Economics have to make sense for timber production.
Would like to see a balance between protection, recreation and production.
Developing a sustainable forest industry - as per the National Forest Policy Statement with particular reference to points: 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.
Security for the forest industries - a 20 year RFA should provide 20 years of security.
Greater investment in plantations.
Sustainable harvesting.
Develop plantation forestry. Victoria is not getting value out of native forests. It is cheap timber.
Consider the importance of the tourist economy of the Otway's and the value of water catchments.
RFAs need to recognise where jobs come from [in the Otway Ranges] – tourism not forestry
There needs to be a more creative approach to base the economy on other forest users (such as Otway Fly, mountain biking and other lower impact nature based options).

There should be more Forest Parks.
Logging is not a tourist friendly industry.
Industry wants 20 year rolling extensions with review every five years but guarantee future of industry.
'Keep us in business' e.g. community wants local hardwood supply and sustainably managed forests –good support of industry in area.
Tighter legislation to prevent land use change of state forests to National Parks.
Community based forestry management.
Spraying and plantations causing issues to environment - crayfish, platypus disappearing.
Better management, maintain integrity of reserves.
Better pest management
More stringent management regulations/restrictions for plantation forestry estate (e.g. spraying).
Don't renew it, would prefer funding to be spent more practically on maintaining ecological values on reserves for climate change adaptation/mitigation research and pest management.
Better communications between department's e.g. ground water pumping.
More indigenous rangers employed.
Extend timeframes in process of extension.
Desire for improved enforcement, monitoring, regulation and compliance of on-ground management FMS under RFA (e.g. 'state government has conflict of interest in regulating itself across departments').
Want the development of a nature-based tourism strategy in Victoria.
There hasn't been a good think about how we can leverage our assets without 'loving' them to death.
We need a transition period to move from native timber to plantation to ensure certainty over that time.
Providing sufficient volumes for industry. Not changing the rules would provide certainty.
Clear-felling to cease.
Protect water catchments. There needs to be proper accounting of water used in forestry. Add the economic and environmental impact (cumulative impacts) and cost (particularly from clear-fell logging).
Economics do not stack up for forestry in the West RFA e.g. one in seven logs for sawmills, six log used for woodchips.
Ensure that is there was not a West RFA that there be clear information about thresholds for significant impact of matter of national environment significance (application of the EPBC Act).
Continue ability to selectively harvest Blackwood to create musical instruments. Take the blackwood from Forest Parks (tenure). Fall trees, cut into pieces and carry out. In wet forest (least concern EVC 30), work closely with VicForests to ensure protecting threatened species and rainforest.
Priorities forest management for conservation. Enable forest and production within the constraints of ensuring effective conservation. Enable low intensity harvesting.
Need to sustain what currently we do as blackwood plantations, how impacts and high value add for specialist instruments (guitars). Products to supply globally, specialist markets. Only large guitar company in Australia showcasing high end Australian forest product.
Sustainability of product for value adding for a range of strong economic story of high quality niche products.
Protecting value adding ventures, not getting some support as seen internationally.
Must consider the impacts of timber harvesting on water yields in catchments. Desal water costs much more that the value generated from timber.
The value of water generated from our forests should be paramount and protected. Might support thinning in water catchments (previously clear-fell logged) to improve water yields as long as not undue impacts on other forest values.
Thoughtful consideration of where plantations are located to manage water values.
Support more value adding local processing.
More thoughtful use of planned burning to avoid forest drying and reduction in water yield.

Need to have long-term thinking, if you think forward 100 years, what are the jobs and industries of the future. More creative thinking about where our sustainable timber for the future is going to come from.
Be more visionary.
More thoughtful use of forest resources to produce high-quality, value adding industries.
Must act on knowledge about impacts of climate change, such as biodiversity.
Should provide alternative training.
Must give national protection in threatening species by EPBC Act.
Complete protection for forests and all species, especially endangered or at risk species.
Don't extend the West Vic RFA. Victorian Act of Parliament, no logging in Otway's.
For RFAs that are extended, evidence based, not biased, carbon environmental water, principles for decisions.
Protect endangered species (flora and fauna) by expanding their habitats even if this means reducing logging areas.
Habitat protection.
Engage community and visitors in the importance of environmental diversity and protection.
Protect our water.
Stop logging on public land.
Water diversity, more forest on management and sustainability.
More effect to clear weed especially foreign ones and ferial animals also.
Change state parks to forest park reserve more because climate change will diminish all forests.
Protect the integrity of reserves/ reduce introduces species of fauna and flora. Feral cats, foxes pigs, deer and European wasp.
Study our forests, learn about all species, their relationships, possible benefits and threats and how to preserve them in their environment. Have this work done by employing qualified people immediately. Produce information available to, and understandable by everyone.
Protection of all forests, animals (flora and fauna), waterways , air. Dealing with feral animals e.g. explore new ways to deal with feral and weeds i.e. employ goats to deal with weeds.
More work on with indigenous people trading and sharing of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge.
Ensure all ecosystems can continue to evolve without human disturbance.
Achieve community awareness and appreciation of all forests connect to natural values and support protection.
Absolute care and sustainable practices for forests and wildlife. Protection of habitat which is the most critical factor impacting endangered species.

Q3. What are the potential improvements you think should be made?

Control of pests and weeds.
False assumption that exploitation of natural resources is necessary.
Genuinely embrace sustainability.
Address the issue of 'net loss'.
Longer term planning (i.e.100 years).
Planning for future state regarding climate change.
Regional specific (to the west of Victoria).
We should invest in a more detailed understanding of soil and plant nutrient cycles. What are the interactions between plants and soil and air micro-nutrients? Are there plants in the forest that might help heal humans damage to the environment.

Use the 'precautionary principle' and go with the least destructive error.
Other uses/industries - adventure based tourism.
Fuel load management and finding the right balance.
Habitat restoration will mean job opportunities.
Allow where applicable for forest management and produce removal in Special Protection Zones (SPZ) to improve ecological and biodiversity values. Locking up a special protection zone can prevent from being managed effectively.
An increased CAR reserve system.
More accurately measure what the RFA has to deliver.
More public education.
Better understanding between opposite views.
We need more control of feral animal populations, especially in the Grampians.
Deer should be classified as pest animals.
Threats to biodiversity as it is decreasing.
Is native logging still viable?
Would like to see some small scale commercial operations in the forest (Wombat, etc.) for value added products.
Review Special Protection Zones (SPZ) rules to ensure management can maintain the values the zone is in place for. E.g. ability to thin over stocked forest areas to allow large trees to develop, which will provide future hollows for gliders and owls.
Address the gap between VicForests not willing to invest in non-commercial forest management (thinning) and DELWP not having a driver to undertake thinning operations.
Levy forestry operations to re-invest in forest restoration.
Need someone outside VicForests to regulate. Regulation has not been effective.
Greater public accountability and transparency.
Need to address unauthorised firewood collection (should require permits).
Better management of weeds and pests.
Maintain/increase woody debris should be written into the agreement.
Sustainable yields have to take account of the climate changes. Not just increased bushfire risks but also broader change to the natural ecosystem (e.g. impact of changes to the number of frost days, changes to species populations).
Need better integration of forest management and fire management. Special Protection Zones (SPZs) should be considered when planning burns.
Sustainable yield – do we need a buffer to cater for climate change.
Need to take into account protection of bees.
Scientists need to be given more time to do research - forests change over generations investment in forest science should also be generational.
Economic rationales need to be extended beyond a 5 or 10 year cycle. The economic impacts of clear fell logging impacts water catchments for decades.
More emphasis on sustainability, only constructive economical use only (i.e. no logging).
Recognize that blackwood forest systems in the Otway's including rainforests and other closed systems are our best firebreaks. Blackwood is not recognized in the state EVC on its own. Tasmania recognized 10 blackwood forest types (all of which exist in the Otway's) with endemic species in both states. Blackwood is presented in 24 EVCs in Otway's. 11 catastrophic fires since European settlement, we have the youngest forest for 500 years.
I agree, most emphasis should be on sustainability - global warming - the future. How can our forest assist to reduce global warning? Some of us have been attending discussions about our forests for over 40 years. For those with children, I ask, what is the best way for us to manage our forest to ensure that they (our children) have a future (past the next election).

Tourism management/ community education about the process. Employ specialists in given areas to advice. Indigenous Australians have many resourceful and sustainable ideas. Open up communication with other views, ideas, solutions.
More investment on management and promotion while controlling land disturbing activities and protecting water and biodiversity.
Control increase in mountain biking and trail biking and walking in sensitive areas.
Continuing science- renew investigation by VEAC to support protection of forests now as State Forest to become Forest Park and National Park.
Greater Stewardship from Government - ensure that information gained in surveys is turned into action - pest animals and plants, illegal use control.
RFA extension should include longer term arrangements to address the shifting baseline phenomenon mindset and address net loss/decline in values overtime.
More traditional owner participation – sustainable management different ideology then ‘west’. How to optimise balanced thinking in terms of ‘sustainability’ and its definition in RFA from different perspectives, to create effective resourcing in future? E.g. achieving balanced perspectives of sustainability e.g. from ecocentric/anthropocentric viewpoints.
RFA extension should include longer term arrangements to address the shifting baseline phenomenon mindset and address net loss/decline in values overtime.
Shift thinking to assess bigger picture in terms of loss over longer timeframes.
Holistic approach to protections of forestry areas, shifting away from protection of land for threatened species and movement towards protecting forest with abundant population e.g. ‘let’s keep what is abundant to stay abundant and arrest decline’.
West Victoria land is fragmented, more clearing and small industry, therefore why renew it? Could it be managed outside RFA framework or develop RFA to be more regionally specific.
Increase risk management into framework and implement adaptive management.
Broaden possible uses in RFA e.g. consider what other industries can use forests? Increase tourism?
Increase and fund fire management and research ‘e.g. fuel load, think regrowth major fire hazard. For example major reseedling 1950s-70s would thin, now won’t be dealt with as no funding causing major fire hazard’.
Impacts of climate change need to be addressed, current gaps in reserve system require protection.
Improve and update CAR to align with ‘Aichi biodiversity targets’ (Convention on Biological Diversity https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/default.shtml) targets are what we should be aiming for.
Increase habitat restoration across landscape (reduce fragmentation) may also be an opportunity for job growth.
Creation of 20-year rolling extension.
Guaranteed industry into the future, there is a need for security.
‘Get the governments to agree and sign renewal so the industry can get back to work’.
20-year period is important (at least, industry wants long-term assurance/certainty (e.g. increase licence period at state level).

'Need to understand the value of forests to manage properly - Implement private forest management harvesting laws'.
Bridge information gap of what's occurring on ground with policy (e. g 'gap exists between knowledge and what's happening on ground, could be thinning for ecology but not happening.'
Plantations – keep industry in business (hardwood).
Set aside funding for non-commercial silviculture to increase forest health.
Increase stability under RFA in context of Forest Management System (FMS) for state.
More research into creating a criteria to measure ecological values of forests (VEAC).
State Government enforce regulation laws to reduce spraying of plantations.
Don't renew the West RFA spend more practically , ecological, reserves, climate change, pest management.
Increase on plantation estate management restorations.
Better communication between departments e.g. groundwater pumping.
More indigenous ranger employment.
Better enforcement monitoring regulating of RFA.
Recorded reporting system, multiple people record studies against it.
Have a long-term program that supports people living in the landscape.
Need an ecological review of the flora/fauna to gauge appropriate remaining habitat.
Undertake reviews of species conservation that aren't reactionary.
Don't log areas that are at-risk of climate change. Logging contracts need to have written into them that climate change risks will result in modifications.
Want to see a clear indication that there is no logging in the state forest/national parks.
Tourism requires forward-planning. If you don't plan or forward-plan, we see the overuse of areas without giving any benefit to the region. If you don't forward plan for the industry it can fall over quite easily.
Give small businesses to have surety of time. An agreement could potentially provide security/surety.
In the past, areas have been locked off within a 5-year term.
There is opportunity to use biomass of native forests. That's not possible at the moment.
Utilisation of the superannuation funds to invest in longer-term plantations and investments. Encouraging local superannuation funds to invest in long-term.
It should be reflected in the RFAs that certification bodies Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) factor in environmental and cultural values.
5 year harvesting plan not yet released by government.
Lack of certainty to inform long term planning decisions by plantation operators.
Government following through on plans, through regulatory guidelines on saw mill side of things.
Bring back managed investment schemes (MIS) hard wood tree plantations and additional seed funding.
Tap into domestic superannuation funding sectors, there is interest from global funds for long term/20+ year investments.
Retain ability to harvest native forest on own land.
Review the CAR reserve system, to ensure land is available for conservation and production use in the most relevant way. Could increase the overall area protected but ensure the tenures/zones are contemporary (based on knowledge of where biodiversity values and timber resources are now).
Access to forest, continue to support sustainable model of operation.
More communications and conversations with value adding businesses.
Need to understand imports of timber supply. Concern this is getting lost in broader debate about timber harvesting and conservation protection.

Stability to support investments in small businesses.
Zip line and selective logging okay, but should be a complete ban on clear-felling.
Value timber coming out for high value, and should deserve a high cost mode of extraction.
Clear-fell logging (1 sawlog:7 pulp logs) is absurd and must stop.
Skilful use of a sustainable resource.
RFAs should not have exemptions from EPBC.
Should stop logging native forests - major clear-felling logging operations. More open to selective logging that is low intensity and is for high value, job creating influences.
More equity in who gets access to forest resources.
Has to create local jobs, local value. Consider enriching local culture.
Could firewood come from plantations? Firewood plantations.
Government should provide solar, electric heating and battery options to people to reduce reliance on firewood.
Water need to be better considered.
Image of forestry need to be improved - ultimate renewable resource.
Recognise carbon storage in wood products and adsorption of growing wood.
Recognise limitations of plantations in terms of quality for sawlogs.
Native hardwood should be used for chips.
RFAs not extended.
No logging in native forests, rely on plantations (natives).
No exemption from EPBC Act.
Listen to science.
Stronger compliance, stronger penalties.
Better pre-harvest survey/research.
Consider amenity values, water catchments and carbon storage.
No clear-felling.
Cancel the Western and Otway RFA.
Is there a need for a Western RFA for Otway's.
Need regular reviews and reassessed e.g. community consultation every 2 years to see if there are new issues to consider
Enforcement of breaches and codes.
Review science on clear-fell, single tree selection for sawlogs - not chips.
Inclusion of water in the RFA.
Fires and burning - impacts on water, biodiversity.

Q4. How do you use forests in your area?

Comments not collected.

Q5. How could the RFAs better provide for multiple forest uses (i.e. recreation, conservation, livelihood and economy)?

More opportunities such as tourism need to be prioritised or habitat restoration that would create more jobs and contribute more to regional and state economies. VicForests forest operations in the west only contribute \$22,000.
Ecologically sustainable forest management must involve state government committed to providing sufficient resources (funds and people) to supervise activities in native forests and to bring people activity outside the RFAs to account.
Ecologically sustainable forest management should integrate productive forestry and timber harvesting across all public forests.
Links need to be made between RFA determinations and the relevant land managers to maximize opportunities to implement National Forest Policy Statements.
Timber harvesting and proactive management is compatible with all other forest uses. Tenure-based protection will limit the ability of silviculture to contribute to other values.
The economy of the Otway's has been greatly improved and diversified through the cessation of logging in the Otway forests . Yes to mountain biking. Yes to Trail bikes, yes to walking , yes to accommodation and food, no to logging.
Investments in walkers, mountain biking, school groups, horse riding trails, joined-up nature / adventure loops, focused on educating people about the forest, the biodiversity, impact of climate change on forests. Investing in indigenous rangers and educators. Linking the city populations with increase environmental awareness and connection for nature. Making a stronger link between the carbon value of the forest with policies, legislation and public awareness about the value of forests in relation to human and planetary health.
Return to more unlogged natural forests.
Health and well being outcomes for people and communities and visitors through careful tourism is making sure there are healthy and sustainable environment.
Hearts with love and nurture, not greed (cultural problem).
Create more walking tracks through the forests, link them with small towns, provide information on ecology and biodiversity, this boosts education and local economies.
How can we use our forests ? It is to collect water, produce oxygen, then educate, study scientifically, recreate. We need to determine the true value of our forest, not what livelihood or economic value we can get out of them. We can't afford that option environmentally.
Keep vehicles and trail bikes out of sensitive forest areas.
Need more managers, with many off-road bikers going into national parks together.
Clearly identify the boundaries.
Aboriginal decision makers, the land was ecologically sustainable managed for countless generations prior to "unsettlement". Hopefully treaty will help correct the balance.
Need to move timber and wood product production out of native forest and into plantations and private land.
Take management of forests in the west away from VicForests and hand it back to DELWP.
Conservation uses such as climate change i.e. Mount Cole is a climate refuge should be protected against threats such as logging.
Given the West is so cleared and fragmented, there is hardly any native forest left! RFAs are obsolete, not needed and the rest of the Western Victoria should be managed separately outside of an RFA.
Give forest management back to DELWP, VicForests are doing a terrible job.
Clearly identify priority usage for particular forests and clearly document the basis for that decision and communicate that to the stakeholders.

Develop a (better) database of forest information (e.g. biodiversity) and then monitor changes in the state of the system. Use this monitoring (in an adaptive management framework) to guide on-going management actions.
I don't agree with promise of placing these "values" on an equal footing.
Provide robust practices for low-impact sustainable timber harvesting for high-volume products.
No Western RFA over Otway forest park, Greater Otway National Park.

Q6. What are your views on existing environmental protections afforded across the entire forest estate (including parks, reserves & State forests) through the RFAs?

Environmental protections do not appear to be working. There is a lot of environmental vandalism with forestry, illegal wood collection activity, outside the agreements.
Forestry is a lawful use of timber resources. Ensure effective regeneration, monitoring and management.
Free firewood policy has led to an increase in illegal and unmanaged collection with negative environmental consequences.
Woefully inadequate as they are poorly resourced. Need more funding and more indigenous engagement, training and sharing of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge.
Narrow buffers, no wood protection of habitats.
What is nature and what is natural?
Allow private contractors to trap or otherwise remove feral deer, pigs.
Need for more on the ground collection of data on introduced species, plants and animals, in areas adjacent to parks, state forests. Their spread; potential for them to impact on our government owned lands (e.g. fleabane in Otway's and along Great Ocean Road).
Control of groundwater pumping for urban consumption has not been addressed within the scope of forest management.
Feral cats, weed species need to be controlled.
Engage aboriginal burning practice, the Otway's used to look very different.
More public awareness of programs that are available e.g. feral cats and other invasive problems, or more funding for these programs if they are not just quietly happening.
The word protection is subject to an ideology that sanctions "exploitation of natural resources resulting in a "net loss" is a vital aspect of economic prosperity".
Special protection zones (SPZ) don't provide proper protection.
RFAs have not met the CAR principles and done nothing to achieve a new agreement (that is not an RFA) should help to fill the existing gaps in the reserve system to meet AICHI targets and current international targets.
The EBPC exemptions for threatened species should be removed.
The RFA did not deliver protections under the CAR system. Additions to the reserve systems occurred via VEAC and other processes.
Undertaking in RFAs not delivered e.g. pest animal projects and lack of recovery programs for threatened species.
Undertakings to set up Phascogale reference areas did not occur.
Inadequate note the list of threatened and vulnerable species.
The parks and reserves were not provided through RFA but despite of them don't re-write history.

Q7. How could the environmental protections be improved?

Liaise with environmental groups with a view to understanding and controlling water authorities total mismanagement of damaged ecostructures (i.e. Yeodene wetland and Gellibrand wetland areas as an example).
There needs to be greater and more rigorous oversight, supervision and penalties applied for activities that are counter to conserving forest diversity and ecosystem health.
Report recognises forestry not sustainable.
Running out of timber.
More officers to police them. Greater powers, more attention to education and training of public.
By not logging native forests.
By returning environmentally sensitive land to native forest e.g. steep valleys, land slip areas.
Ensuring that native forests are not encircled by plantations. If necessary buy back to enable wildlife corridors.
No logging, more flow of water in the river.
Removing noxious weeds and foreign weeds.
Management of feral animals; more stringent protection for endangered animals and their environment.
Dob in a weed - and have it looked at seriously. Even if it only looks at the potential cost of its removal. This may be what's needed to start alarm bells ringing.
Engage with, and may be employ, local people to monitor weed problems as they have the time to make regular observations of where and how rapidly weeds are spreading.
Divert funding to on the ground protections.
By really protecting: address the line of decline of habitat, open spaces, species and connected ecosystems.
Permanently protect the Special Protection Zone (SPZ) and all under represented ecosystems.
Think nationally - some ecosystems extend across the border and may be even more threatened in South Australia.
Better control and eradication of pest species.
Better fire management – don't burn to reach targets. Decide what type of ecosystem is required before planning burns. Not all ecosystems and species can withstand repeated fires.
If the EBPC exemptions remain then the Victorian Government should be forced to make sure that threatened species are protected as they would be if the EPBC exemption was cancelled.
General management of public land could be improved e.g. Pest plant and animal projects; processes of recovery of threatened species , like the red tailed black cockatoo: no net loss and aim for a gain.
Arrest decline in all species.
Protection of water catchments.
Completed CAR system.
Habitat restorations, including corridors.
Properly fund biodiversity on all public land. At present there is an focus on environmental groups and amateur naturalists for records of threatened species.
Properly fund scientists to carry out environmental research.
Protect from logging areas of old-growth in the central highlands in a National Park.

Q8. What opportunities could the RFAs provide to support access to and traditional use of forests by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people?

Listen to the first nation people and those who have the knowledge and include them in the decision making.
Treaty, that will hopefully be the next step.

Ask the Traditional Owners how they would like to be involved. We have lost far too much of their knowledge and skills. We need to act quickly and retrain so that the Registered Aboriginal Parties are properly resourced and supported.
Ask the Traditional Owners. Enable training as Parks Victoria and DELWP fire units are doing.
Negotiation and liaison with Eastern Maar and Wathaurong to identify areas of significance for protection.
Promotion of educational historical first nations use of lands.
Sit down, listen to Traditional Owners and then act.
Understand and educate around historical context prior to settlement and make reparations.
Can the RFA not only provide access and use of forests by Traditional Owner and Aboriginal People - but ask them to share any knowledge they still have about RFA areas, and use that knowledge to use our forests for long term enjoyment by all.
Cannot speak for Traditional Owners, but I am concerned that a condition of joint management of public land may be that the Traditional Owners will have to consent to commercial timber harvesting.
Ask Traditional Owners to take time to ask and note with many aboriginal people campaigned for having these areas protected.

Q9. How could the RFAs enable the legal rights of Traditional Owners to partner in land management and seek economic and cultural opportunities to be realised in future forest management?

Actually enshrine in the RFA space for traditional use of forests by Traditional Owners or Aboriginal people. Ensure that sacred sites and particular trees are absolutely protected by the agreement.
Engage with the Traditional Owners about the possibilities for them to partner in land management, economic and cultural issues before drafting up the future RFAs.
Employment of first nation peoples in key areas around protection, pest and weed control, fire burn-offs.
Completely support the of support Traditional Owners, particularly in the light of such a change in the character of the Otway's.
Increase the employment of Traditional Owners and allow them to have a say in the management of forests.
Just as the government has a mandated percentage of contracts that have to go to indigenous owned companies, the RFAs could set key performance indicators (KPIs) that means the RFA is holding itself accountable to Traditional Owners indicators. Such as the number of rangers employed to monitor the RFA; number of indigenous companies holding contracts related to the forest; number of indigenous communities involved in burns and other programs.
RFAs are based as white man's ideology of exploitation of resources and using extractive industry to underpin the economy. Therefore – unless this agenda is surrendered- the engagement of Traditional Owners is merely a false inclusion of their traditions and cultural practices of caring for Country.
Where appropriate to recognise the various benefits of cultural burning, and involve Traditional Owners in developing fire management plans.

Q10. How could the RFAs consider climate change & other large-scale natural disturbances (including bushfires)?

The RFA needs (if it is to continue) to build in accounting for the factors and effects of climate change, bushfires and other large scale disturbances. And in this RFA not permit further disturbances while the forest recovers from these disturbances.
RFAs must not be rigid but must allow for revision when there are large scale disturbances.
Bushfires are normal, climate change is not. Enhanced monitoring on climate change must be implemented.
More people leads to more infrastructure leads to more bushfires, in addition to naturally-occurring bushfires.
RFAs should recognise the role of timber industry in responding to / suppressing bushfires and maintaining access tracks.

RFA's should promote silviculture management to reduce climate change risks through active replanting in climate change affected areas; increasing resilience to bushfires by stand thinning; reducing risks with mechanical fuel reduction.
Victorian grown and processed timber is carbon negative alternative to steel, concrete and imported timber. Victorian timber products are a mitigation opportunity.
Control the excessive burning program carried out by DELWP.
Impose limits to malignant urban growth – the land is being buried alive by development.
Allow the removal of houses in areas prone to bushfires.
RFA's could seek to increase forested areas?
Intact wet forests, add moisture to weather systems (from micro to macro scale).
Coupees and industrial forest regrowth due to warm and dry weather (from micro to macro scale).
Restrict urban development near forests.
Use the zombie Western RFA to extend forested areas. Purchase farmland for biodiverse plantations which have both a timber resource and biodiversity values.
The true cost of greed and self interest could be recognised.
More control measures on feral animals and plants. Attention to species decline.
Heavily invest in combined research, policy and practice, with discussions between stakeholders types: indigenous, academic, forest fire management agencies, local communities, industry, councils, animal management agencies. These decisions need to be informed by multiples perspectives. Invest in climate change monitoring scientists across the Otway's, who are noticing and reporting on 'canary in the coal mine' observations which wouldn't be seen unless there was concerted focus.
Track the carbon balance of current situations and modelling it against planned policies and outcomes of planned burns.
Continue logging ban in state controlled forests (and at federal level).
Continue town protection burns as a means of forest protection from escaping private land burns.
Continue town protection burns which also leads to more education and communication and invite the community to engage in programs to prepare for changes and what the impacts may be.
By taking it seriously and acting on the threat of habitat loss and species loss.
By acknowledging that the composition of our forest communities will change over the life of the RFA and manage for the future and not just the present (e.g. model future forest fire regimes and develop plans to deal with future scenarios).
Invest more time and energy into managing pest and weed issues that will only worsen with climate change.
Climate change is a reason not to harvest trees on public land.
Regrowth from logging increases fire risk.

Q11. How could the RFA's better address industry sustainability?

Industry sustainability requires long-term planning and investment in plantations to that the native forests in the future are protected from continued depletion.
RFA's have not delivered stability or security of timber supply.
RFA's need stronger safeguards for productive forest areas, volumes and quality including an adaptive management approach when targets are not set yet due to fires.
Forest management can not rely on drawing the same volumes from increasingly constrained forest areas. Needs a more extensive landscape scale approach.
Support farm forestry and agroforestry. Plantations to divert log supply from native forests.
Improve strength of biodiversity law – research and protection to prevent loss of threatened species on private land.
Include plantations of top firewood species to relieve pressure on forest parks, such as wattle species.

Increase diversity of species for furniture e.g. Blackwood on private lands.
Tall Ash Forest National Park would create a tourism ecological industry (using plantations).
Forestry should only occur in plantations. We have already destroyed far too much of our native forest biodiversity.
Maintain native habitats, animals deserve a place and their homes to remain untouched.
Support tourism industry as people love the animals.
Impose a sovereign tax and increase the cost of tree removal.
The RFA could recognise that we need an industry that produces timber BUT it doesn't have to be at the expense of our remaining forests. The RFA could support a timber/plantation industry on private land i.e. tree farming (note the Otway Agroforestry group local to Birregurra and Barwon Downs area) and their ideas.
Make it about more than just cutting down trees! Research into microbiology and medicines.
An indigenous issue: Pay the Rent (for the land). Where are the Otway's people?
Move the plantations onto private land: more jobs, better products.
Use the federal carbon abatement fund to restore habitats.
Manage plantation for timber production not tax minimisation.
Don't undercut commercial plantations by selling subsidized products from native forests. The price of timber from native forests must reflect the cost of growing the next forest.
I question the merit of how the word "sustainability" is used / misused when the current scenario is "net loss" or a "line of decline". Managing under "net loss" is not sustainable.
Properly audit for sustainable yields (revise quickly if natural disaster strikes).
The RFA West is still working on an over estimation of sustainable yield.
History of over-harvesting e.g. in 2006, only 10% of Wombat Forest was mature forest.
Sawlog harvesting in native forests should transition to plantations on private land.
Use plantation timber. We have plenty of timber to supply Victoria.
Promote small scale selective harvesting for high value products, such as musical instruments in areas of low conservation significance.

Q12. How could the RFA's encourage investment and new market opportunities for forest-based industries (including the forests and wood products industry, tourism, apiary and emerging markets such as carbon)?

The underground water that maintains the 'forest' when it does not rain and become visible in streamflow. The rationale for putting California redwoods high on the scale as if this is California. It is not.
Photographic evidence of erosion near 'old trees'.
By actually establishing plantations driven by the RFA process, not just talk about them.
Establish a correlation between tourism and the forests. RFAs must define the partnerships between tourism and forests.
Trees need bees and RFAs need to address this.
Long-term planning required for carbon in RFAs.
Re-iterate and actually establish plantations for forestry.
Ensure guaranteed supply of produce to enable long-term investments to be made.
Timber-dependent business must have security of supply to allow long-term investment.
Revegetation of farmlands with both native forest for carbon sequestration and plantation timber for firewood and building. Scrap the woodchip industry as converts too quickly back to carbon dioxide.

Develop mixed species plantations to produce biochar for both energy supply and soil conditions.
True agroforestry should include small scale farming on the same land as the tree crops (private land).
What is the true cost of destructive industries.
It's only the north sides of hills in the Otway's that can possibly benefit from burning and eucalypt management by that horribly blunt tool. The south side has more tourism, water, beech trees, national parks. We need holistic approaches: monitoring the extinctions.
Research into other products. Tourism - how to do it better. The first nations experience and how to integrate it.
Keep the industry out of native forests.
You don't know what you're doing and you don't know where you're going.
Start publishing and publicising the carbon value of the forest. This needs to be much more deeply and publicly included in the modelling and policy decisions. Federal taxes need to subsidise the preservation of the forest (carbon tax).
Cancel West RFA.
Use of forest for carbon abatement would increase local employment.
Ecological tourism is big business but not recognized as such by government. E.g. the presence of a simple vagrant bird has been calculated to generate more than \$200,000 (Aleutian terns on the north Coast of NSW) in income from visitors. There are many more of such examples.
Protect habitats, move towards Aichi targets. Protect catchments as water is more valuable than timber.
Tourism and values and protection of water (i.e. Wimmera headwaters) need to be recognised and valued.
Transition to plantation would provide more employment.
Subsidise planting on private already cleared land.
Create robust, long term agreements and methods to sustainably harvest timber for high value products.

Q13. How can the RFAs support the adaptive management of Victoria's forests in response to emerging issues (e.g. major bushfires) and opportunities (e.g. emerging industries)?

Move out of logging native forests in total. Use plantation timber. Research shows that adequate plantations are available.
No more native forest logging, move to plantations.
Work with Landcare and Agroforestry groups to create reliable log supply with good quality on farms.
Create a tall ash forest national park in the central highlands.
Provide more wildlife habitats to allow the species diversity to be sustained.
Establish blackwood rainforest for forests to protect the remnant old forests in Otway's.
Victoria's forests should be there for the benefit of all Victorians - so what is the major issue which faces all Victorians? Ask the scientists. Is it global warming? Should we leave our forests to continue as its natural job is, as natural preservation of species (not all identified - or their possible benefit to mankind)? Indigenous information, water collection and purification, carbon use. Can we afford to continue to believe that timber is the most important product from our forests? We can grow timber nearly everywhere. Not these other very necessary products.
Better understand research into planned burning and environmental tourism.
Need to build in partnerships between the government agencies and researchers (universities and independent organisations and individuals), which work actively with communities to work together - sharing data and interpreting and considering responses in light of multiple perspectives. Bring the passion of the community together with agencies who hold the access to the data, and together we can work out the best responses to protect the Otway's.

Work closely with the tourism parts of Shire and Tourism Victoria and Regional Development Victoria (RDV) to acknowledge the state strategies that are underway which are working towards expanded positive uses of the forest (tourism, biking, environmental education) so the notion of productive forests is expanded to capture the non-timber opportunities that also need careful management.
Take away the management of forest in the West from VicForests.
If there is an agreement. It should be specific to the West, not one that has been developed for the east of the state.
Areas at greatest risk from climate change i.e. Mount Cole should have management planning prioritised and reduction of threats such as logging which is open to 70% of the forest.
Proper management, such as pest plant and animals, was never delivered in previous RFAs and should be.
Work together to use up to date science on sustainable forest practices. Develop comprehensive methods to avoid high value areas and allow selective harvesting in areas of low conservation value.
No RFA over Greater Otway national parks/Otway forest parks.

Q14. What areas of research would better equip us to sustainably manage Victoria's forests?

Update and regular review of State Forest Resource Inventory.
High quality forest mapping as the basis for wood resource modelling. e.g. map forest health and change.
Investigate forest management / silviculture approaches for reducing bushfire risks e.g. mechanical fuel reduction.
Identify best practice to enable conservation of biodiversity and environment: best practice of fire management; harvesting from native forests; production of plantation forests as an alternative for forest supply forestry.
Post major incident area ongoing research regional e.g. the ecological effects of Ash Wednesday and Black Saturday fires.
Species identification surveys on fine scale, for birds, fungi, plants. What are the best methods to control feral plants and animals.
Impact of water supply caused by logging practices – private and state land.
Impact on soil health caused by disturbance (mycorrhizal fungi).
Biodiversity blitz, species recovery plans with funding and training.
Reintroduce predator species such as support Quoll populations.
Aboriginal culture and management of a sustainably complete environment.
Soil nutrient and micronutrient cycles in relation to fire management.
Topsoil runoff due to clear-felling. Effects on water quality.
Reference to early documentation relating to original state of forest prior to European settlement and use as a guide to an end goal. Early settlers diaries and artworks also provide this information.
What does 'sustainable' mean when your are 'managing' a forest? Is 'sustainable' best measured retrospectively? Can we continue to manage our forests as we have done for 200 years? Or should we look at how they were managed for the previous 60,000 years?
Water management for Barwon River and its uses to support Geelong.
Species decline verses introduced plants and animals.
We need less controlled burning in large areas.
How to use fire in a way that balances mitigation of bushfire, with impacts on biodiversity.
Run off of chemical fertilizers and herbicides and impact on waterways.
Regenerative agriculture in the Otway's is how building soil carbon can be achieved.
Carbon value of the forest needs to be estimated and fed into policy decisions.
The dollar value of non-logging uses of the forest (tourism, education, biking, etc).
Management of invasive species, conservation of biodiversity.

Research priority is to allow science to speak to the conversation independently of politicians. Sustainability should not subject of a political process, it should be placed above it.

There are not many areas to log, so research should focus on biodiversity, threatened species, climate adaption and resilience in high risk places, like Mount Cole as a climate refuge, and reduce the biggest threats (i.e. logging which is currently open to 70% of the forest).

Q15. How could the RFA monitoring, review (including the five-yearly reviews) and reporting arrangements be improved?

Make sure that funds and resources are sufficient for adequate reviews of RFAs management , activities and review.

Ensure that monitoring and review occurs regularly (every 5 years) and immediately after each major disturbance to allow for continued sustainability of the ecosystems within native forests.

Report on timber areas and volumes with actions to address when benchmarks are not met.

Five yearly reviews must be published every five years.

Improve reporting and monitoring of plants and animal number, both indigenous and introduced.

Promulgate reporting and mentoring outcomes.

Record total soil nutrient profiles before and after burning (including micronutrients) to determine the real and long-term generational costs of forest logging and burning practices.

Do a cost analysis on royalties, subsidies and infrastructure for government verses benefit of water, species diversity, conservation of flora.

Look at opportunities for local industry, selective logging and areas of monoculture decline.

Firewood collection points are not monitored effectively i.e. vehicles travelling from Melbourne and Geelong with trailers overloaded with firewood from these designated areas. We need to bring back permits.

Get back to indigenous management (before our 'management' over 200 years). How did they decide when to burn? Our population numbers may make some of these answers irrelevant, but it would be worthwhile asking the question.

Divert the funding from data crunchers to practical applications in the forest to protect integrity.

Include carbon impact and other environmental and social variables in the indicators for all policies that flow from the RFA.

Be brave and have community monitoring processes built into the system. People-powered monitoring and research would use the new digital opportunities (GIS, digital image repositories, geo-locating species) just look at how the international mountain biking corporate websites use community gathered GIS data. This would bring together the commitment of local people who are living in the forests and who would love to contribute in an ongoing, connected and meaningful way in monitoring and review of the impacts of policies.

Want to see economics of forest management and RFA - cost benefits, socio-economic etc.

Develop and implement a more efficient and effective monitoring system that captures a more complete picture of the state of the forests (e.g. include fauna in the existing system).

Monitor across the tenures.

Other Comments/Concerns

Consult further.

Business has invested for the future and is concerned about ongoing security of access and supply.

Every loss is permanent, every gain is temporary.

How we (community) are heard is a major problem.

If there is broad opposition, will the RFAs be renewed?

Areas being harvested with no clear product (firewood).

Based on the observations, how do you advertise and promote to engage with a broader and larger communities at drop in events?
The green house impact of clear-felling.
Does VicForests have social licence to operate? If strong opposition against RFA (modernisation) can it be stopped?
Increase National Parks and reduce State Forests in West Victoria.
Timber utilisation plans should consider whether harvesting in high priority biodiversity areas should be happening.
Should consider how to allocate funding for preservation of biodiversity.
Strategic application of funding to conserve a wide array of areas (not just high-scored reserves/parks).
Friends of Mount Cole group to represent local community voice in area (Beaufort), we want our forests to remain as state forests.
Pyrenees Ranges may be converted to national park which is disappointing'.
Recruitment is challenging, trying to find qualified and quality of staff is challenging.
Management of forestry long-term at state level between DELWP and VicForests is an issue. DELWP doesn't do non-commercial silviculture and VicForests won't do work that doesn't provide economic growth. E.g. Mt Cole, no natural browsing, trees are choking need silviculture thinning.
RFA exemptions under EPBC Act 1999 are great.
RFA doesn't provide industry certainty (driven by politics) how can increase stability and access within context of Forest Management System (FMS) 'e.g. more forests opened but harvested less intensely?'
We need stronger legislation to prevent constant land use changes (state forests to National Parks).
Fear logging in Otway's.
There is a need for a better relationship between communities and government.
All about wood exports and chipping.
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act shouldn't be used to access industry.
Invest in research on dieback Otway forests.
Ineffective level of compliance enforcement of regulations of SMP and people in parks.
Community campaign - West RFA cancellations.
Don't have logging in Otway's.
RFA is abstract.
State Government has conflict of interest (political).
Extend the signing of the agreement beyond March 2020 to allow for more community engagement.
There is no industrial logging in the West RFA. Don't see the point of the commonwealth's involvement in this process.
Want to see a draft of the agreement before it is signed.
Removal of native forestry harvesting will limit the ability to fight fires. Having forestry adjacent to parks allows for access for fire fighting.
Production forest is certified and this requires industry to meet broader values.
Is there any recognition that forests are covered by certification bodies?
Will the RFA acknowledge the values as defined by certification bodies?
No focus on water in literature or forestry practices in particular logging and clear-fell practices.

Plantations shouldn't be in the Otway's, should be in lowlands. Far too destructive to water due to steep slopes and erosion.
Private forestry on private land should continue to be harvested.
Native forestry should be able to access carbon markets.
VicForests management is unimpressive and concerning.
Consider economics. What value coming out of financial analysis required, including transport and roads and emissions from coupe burning.
Safety issues on roads from trucks and trucks causing road damage.
More effort to new and emerging issues e.g. tourism.
Jobs and logging appears to be priority.
Each forest takes at least 200 years to reach full biodiversity.
Eucalypt forest takes at least 200 years to reach full biodiversity.
Harvesting - 80 year rotation.
Water use - 20% reduction over 80 year rotation.
Prescribed burns trying to meet 5% target and doing it in appropriate areas (leading to poor water quality in water catchments).
Too much separation/siloing of issues - forestry, water, fire management - we need to integrate.
Healthy forests, heath, wetlands with a renewal of biodiversity . How do we ensure that areas not currently not protected gain protection.
"Our Water, Our Future, Our Forest" is / was the Otway Ranges Environment Network slogan which has been plagiarized by countless administration since the 1998. Campaign to have a RFA public meeting at Geelong west town hall. Geelong has been excluded from the official process.
There is the research that shows "sound" can disturb animals, maybe we need to create places that virtually no humans go. Every time areas are beautiful and pristine etc. humans want to visit more. The Otway's fly is successful in consolidating the needs of nature tourism. It would be good to provide more intense exploratory experiences that both satisfy tourists and better preserves important conservation areas.
There is no such beast as ecologically sustainable forestry in native forest. Therefore phase out all native forest logging to focus on agroforestry on private land. Fund revegetation of forest parks and state parks to national parks with intensive programs, education and indigenous engagement.
Ban chainsaws and all fossil fuelled vehicles from the forests... stone tools only! Sounds ridiculous doesn't it? But... phase out industrial logging of Victorian publicly owned forests and revegetate when previously logged country is available.
Need to further investigate the likely need for an EPBC Act referral for low-scale selective harvesting of specially timbers. Pretty sure it would trigger an EPBC Act exemption - identify the threshold of significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance.
Needs Security.
Accessibility local staff of DELWP and VicForest, we want to be further engaged with personal contact preferred.
Participate in future forest management and involvement and process.
West Vic RFA should be cancelled.

