

Modernisation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements

From [REDACTED]

1) THE RFAS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BULK OF VICTORIA'S RESERVE SYSTEM

84 per cent of the reserve system was in place before the RFAs. Many of newer parks were created either outside the RFA areas, or were created due to extensive community campaigns in spite of the RFAs.

2) THE RFAS IGNORE KEY CRITERIA IN NATIONAL AGREED POLICY FOR FORMAL PROTECTION

The Victorian RFAs have embedded the 'informal' (not formally or permanently protected) reserve system.

- Only 8 per cent of areas identified for protection in the Victorian RFAs were formally protected in parks and reserves.
- All, or at a minimum, a significant proportion of the informal reserve system should be included in the formal reserve system and protected under the National Parks Act.

3) THE RFAS ARE A BLOCK TO BETTER PROTECTION AND NEW NATIONAL PARKS

There is no demonstrable link between the RFAs and an increase in the conservation estate.

- The formal creation of national parks in the last decade is at its lowest in the last 50–60 years.
- There is no evidence that the RFAs either promoted or provided any funding for private land conservation.
- The RFAs seem to claim the reserve system as some sort of 'pair' or 'offset' for continued native forest logging. Victorian government policy also assumes the same for loss of native vegetation across the state, which is in reality a sort of policy double counting.

4) THE RFA ECOLOGICAL CRITERIA ARE OUTDATED AND INCONSISTENT

The ecological criteria (JANIS criteria) is now outdated and inconsistent with a range of other international agreements and national strategies

- The JANIS criteria should be reviewed against new international and national strategies and new science, before the RFAs are renewed.

5) THE RFA REVIEW FAILS TO RECOGNISE THAT THERE ARE STILL SIGNIFICANT GAPS IN VICTORIA'S RESERVE SYSTEM

Other state government policy clearly states that there is a gap of over 2 million hectares in the formal reserve system in Victoria.

- The RFA review does not adequately address the gaps in the reserve system.
- This is in contrast to the stated objectives in the Victorian Government's Biodiversity 2037 strategy.

6) THE RFAS IGNORE CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- Any new RFAs must include climate change triggers, and in the case of climate related events, lead to:
 - A ceasing of logging in effected areas

- A comprehensive re-assessment of values and appropriateness of RFAs and sustainable harvest levels
- An agreed carbon method for assessing avoided logging in native forests should be completed urgently
- Climate models should be completed at a finer scale and climate plans developed for each key patch of public forest.

7) THE RFAS IGNORE BUSHFIRE IMPACTS

- Any new RFAs must include fire triggers and lead to:
 - A cease of logging in affected areas
 - A comprehensive re-assessment of values and appropriateness of RFA and sustainable harvest levels.

8) THE RFAS IGNORE OTHER FOREST VALUES

- Forest should be managed for multiple values, which could be done without RFAs like in many other parts of the state. Why should the native forest logging industry get special treatment and exemptions from national environmental laws?