

Newlands Friends of the Forest



Submission Response to : Independent Consultation Paper – Modernisation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements Dr William Jackson May 2019

First we, at Newlands Friends of the Forest acknowledge the First Nations people of the forests of this country. We would like to acknowledge elders past present and emerging, with their deep knowledge of and connection to country.

We strongly reject the proposition that logging continue in our Victorian native forests, and strongly reject the renewals of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements.

Understandings of our connections to and connections within our unique forests in scientific studies are only now emerging. .We clearly understand that our State forests have been reduced to a critical level and need to be protected. State Forests are a unique and significant part of our culture for those of us who live in Victoria. The connections and links linked to us in many ways including our Water Supply and our Air Shed are significant and real. It is saddening to see these forests be destroyed, our state owned agency for the benefit of a few over the benefits for all Victorians.

Concerns about the current as well as future logging practices in our State Forests are many fold. The links for our water and air sheds are primary links which are documented. Other deeper connections have yet to be explored.

We can see the importance of our intact forests for communities growing over the next decades as the significance of these special places are realised by all Victorians, as well as tourists coming to explore these unique natural places.

The Modernisation review does not consider the importance of connection and health in detail - but does acknowledge the importance of recreation users of the forests. The report does acknowledge briefly the greater value of our forests have in protecting and promoting them as a place to visit.

' Improvement needed – Victoria's forests generate a wide range of values that provide substantial environmental and socio-economic

benefits. In addition to providing material values for the benefit of people, such as water, wood, fibre and recreational opportunities, Victoria's forests have important cultural and historical heritage values.'

In this paper we will expand on some of the detrimental impacts the impacts of the RFAs have had on communities and the importance of them being able to fully appreciate our Victorian State Forests and advocate for the protection of the forests for all Victorians

Smoke from Industrial Logging Burns – Impact on Our Air Shed

Air pollution is a major cause of death. According to the World Health Organisation 4.2 million deaths are caused every year as a result of exposure to ambient (outdoor) air pollution. The health effects from smoke pollution of current burning practices of harvesting wasn't part of the report. This has a tangible and significant impact on the health of Victorians and needs to a key consideration of our Forest Management.

This impacts both people in their own homes and communities as well as those working and visiting the forests.

March – May the time of the year when the forest is most amenable to visiting is the same time that industrial burns take place where logging has occurred. This industrial smoke impacts the health of many Victorians as the smoke travels over towns and other populated areas. This smoke has not been monitored. The practice of these hot burns precludes walking in certain areas, adds to the risk of these fires 'escaping' and also severely pollute whole areas. These factors all detract from the enjoyment of the forest for all Victorians. This issue was referred to in the Auditor General's review in terms of resource management – but not in terms of health of communities – or the sustainable levels of forest to be maintained after clearing all of the forest land.

This issue has been raised at many forums and was published widely last year:

'Given that a substantial proportion of the recent smoke over Melbourne and surrounding regional Victoria likely originated from logging burns, could that smoke be deemed industrial pollution? This is a valid question, given the serious health impacts associated with [smoke pollution](#).

Logging burns would not be needed (and a substantial amount of associated smoke not generated) if the forest had not been logged in the first place. It is imperative that government departments inform the public about the smoke pollution coming from logging operations, whose purpose is for private commercial gain.'

<https://theconversation.com/logging-burns-conceal-industrial-pollution-in-the-name-of-community-safety-96712>

To give an idea of the quantity of the ash produced the auditor general has referred to 16 % of the actual harvest

VicForests estimated that in 2012–13, at least 250 000 cubic metres of residual wood—16 per cent of the total harvest—was left on the forest floor, and burnt in the regeneration burns. It is not sold primarily because there is currently no market for it, although some is also from forests that are so distant from the pulp mill and woodchip exporters that it makes transport costs prohibitive. Some is also needed to fuel the regeneration burn, although VicForests has not quantified the amount.

The need to find uses for this low-value wood was identified in the 2009 *Timber Industry Strategy* and again in the TIAP in 2011. These committed the government to supporting the industry to develop new and emerging markets for this wood, for example for bioenergy, biofuels, and the value of carbon stored in forests.

Protect our State forests for all Victorians.



