

## RFA Submission



### 7.7.19

The RFAs were established to allow the timber industry to operate beyond National environment law. Our forests are in decline; the timber industry is in decline: RFAs are irrelevant and ought to be abolished.

The native timber industry's financial contribution to the economy is dwarfed by the value of key regional industries as illustrated by a study Experimental Ecosystem Accounts for the Central Highlands of Victoria (July 2017). Indeed, forest related tourism generated more than 20 times the revenue of the native forest industry. (\$260 million versus \$12 million) Agriculture, water supply and carbon storage accounted for another \$671 million. Why would we continue to destroy such a fine financial asset? The RFAs do not account for these additional financial contributions made by our forests.

The RFAs are not responsible for the bulk of Victoria's reserve system - 84% being in place before the RFAs. Many of the newer parks were created outside RFA areas, or were created due to extensive community campaigns in spite of RFAs which only serve to assist logging and hinder conservation. Indeed, the formal creation of National Parks in the last decade is at its lowest level in 50 years. There is simply no evidence that the RFAs either promoted or provided any funding for private land conservation.

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.

The RFAs ecological criteria are outdated and inconsistent and need to be reviewed against new international and national strategies and new science.

The RFAs also 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 affected areas. VEACs Fibre and Wood Assessment 2017, Appendix A Consultant's Report states that in the case of Mountain Ash ( the most valuable source of timber for the logging industry) that the total area suitable for the regeneration of mountain Ash could decrease by 80% under a 3 degree climate change scenario by 2080. How can we lock in another 20 years of RFAs when we are not even taking into account the scientifically predicted huge reduction in wood supply?

In short, none of the Victorian RFAs have met their objectives. Numbers of forest dependant species listed as threatened continue to rise - including Victoria's own State emblem

Leadbeaters possum - and forest health continues to decline and is only predicted to get worse with the effect of climate change. The native forest industry is in decline as their main resource runs out or is reduced by bushfire.

Healthy Parks Healthy People - so goes the Government mantra. The health of our parks and reserves will only decline under a renewed RFA system, as will the health of our citizens - many of whom connect with our natural environment for physical and mental wellbeing.

It is not economy vs ecology. Economy and ecology need to go hand in hand. Ecologically sensitive economies have to be crafted if a sustainable future on this planet is possible.

Our lives are not individual existences. What we exhale, the trees are inhaling; what the trees exhale, we are inhaling. If this was in our experience, would we have to tell you to plant and protect trees?

Yours Sincerely,

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