

**6 July 2019**

**VICTORIAN Regional Forest Agreements**

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I and very disappointed with the Victorian Regional Forest Agreement because it was 20 years ago they made these decisions, not current as a more cohesive and sensible management of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements would be every two years which would be more viable economically, diversity for the biodiversity of flora and fauna as Volunteers seem to be the only 'managers' of many of the national parks and reserves with State or Federal Funding and sometimes Local government funding if the Shire or Shire Council or Council obtains State or Federal funding which isn't always guaranteed. I have been told many Councils do not put the environment as a number one priority, nor do they seem to care about replanting natives in their roundabouts as they continue to use weeds not native to the area and changed frequently as they die off quicker thus keeping their contractors paid and in work which could be spent more productively elsewhere with better efficiency.

Forest Law and Governance I haven't seen any evidence of this nor has the Citizen Science or any Landcare entity advised me of what is happening to the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements until last year when I was invited to go to a Workshop at Dunkeld which was very disappointing as they expected at least 40 people and only 5 were in attendance. As each of us were asked what the Regional Forests meant to us I listened to the other four people who spoke out bush trails, amenities for campers, increased better signage. When I was asked I talked about the soil ph, leaf litter on the ground, different types of bark, fungus, insects, water quality, frogs, fish, mammals birdlife and migratory birds which are nesting in various forests and reserves in Victoria, the trees themselves how wide they are, old growth forests, texture of leaves,

veins and stem of the leaves, shape of the leaves, branches, shape of the trees, fallen logs protecting other animals, insects eaten by birds, native bees, flora, fauna and the canopy of the trees as I went zip lining a few years ago an experience to see and hold my hands not even a third of a way around a tree – an old growth forest so high you just see the sky. No one else at that workshop mentioned the life of the Victorian Regional Forests. I'm not a Traditional Owner but for 60 years I've lived knowing about the Old Growth Forests seen logging trucks 'oh mistakenly cut them down, didn't realise it wasn't in the logging section, in the farmers fenced yard, sorry. You know the chainsaw noise and with my headphones on and helmet I didn't realise". It's punishable by courts the Aboriginal Traditional owners tell me, next time it happens take their photo would you, their number plate of their car, isn't it the same when these same people or people like minded who use their four wheel drives or quad bikes on beaches do the same in the regional Victorian forests same mentality.

Kindly tell me who all the Aboriginal Traditional Owners are for every forest/reserve under the current Victorian Regional Forests Agreement, I'd like to know and I'm sure they would too As I think about the Aborigines for the Budj Bim Forest who have cared for it are now on their way to UNESCO to protect their forest why aren't all the Victorian Regional Forests Agreements also protected from logging why the forest is not dependent on tourism, it's the other way round, you want more people visiting the State of Victoria but you don't realise to do this it has to be a win situation for the forests for the birdlife and mammals as flora and fauna cannot speak of the devastation to their habitat but you and I can see the logging areas next to it, for farmers who couldn't stay or sold out for logging companies to strip the soil so only blue gums can grow as the soil returns to wetlands because now nothing else will grow in it. Well I'm glad I had nothing to do with the last 20 years of miss-managements of the Victorian

Regional Forests Agreements let us all hope next year or in two years or a shorter term for the Victorian Regional Forests Agreements are more areas not just five which couldn't possibly be managed responsibly, the forests and reserves are so different from one another if Gippsland has two regions to care for its forests why aren't the demographics of the remaining forests and reserves of Victoria monitored as closely with more regions not the same 5 there is too much diversity, biodiversity, habitat, flora, fauna, birdlife.

#### **4.2.2 Page 44 of the Consultant's Report**

Why is the Victorian Government accommodating the Timber Industry for logging when our old growth forests are going with the loggers, no one is there to monitor the loggers when felling their trees or an old growth tree absolutely no one is monitoring them and why not. Oh yes, it's because the Victorian Government won't, can't hasn't budgeted to spend enough of its budget on the forests not just the press releases of Minister's being photographed taking children out to be photographed in a forest to be Junior Rangers or giving out Grants to local community groups or Grants to local shires, councils or shire councils because their budget is geared to the environment; no its roads, transport, rates. This cannot continue if the Victorian Government is serious about its Victorian Regional Forests then have more than 5 regions and don't wait another 20 years to do anything do it every 2 years or 5 years and if something happens that warrants further investigation have a clause in your Agreements to reinvestigate the problems so you aren't waiting for another 12 months before the Government or its departments can 'fix it'.

**4.3.3** What are the cost effectiveness of current indicators for the actions of the Victorian Regional Forests because I do not know and I doubt of anyone who watches

campers leave a camp site with their rubbish where their tent was would feel remorseful in being asked to take their rubbish with them. Even when confronted by it they shrug their shoulders and keep walking if this is the sort of apathy you want from campers from Victoria, rest of Australia and Overseas visitors I don't believe you are encouraging any bush walker what if they flick a cigarette butt in the forest burning half the forest as they run might injure themselves. Signage, warnings at camp sites take your rubbish with you, place it in the bins provided if the bins are overflowing ring this Ranger number so the camp areas are tidy once more for the next camping group or single person out to enjoy the amenity of the bush. Providing accurate not just better information on the effectiveness of the Victorian Regional Forests, I would mind knowing all the names of all the forests under the current arrangements of five regions for all these diversified forests as a public document, might you have brochures of all these other forests I only seem to know 5 to 6 in South West Victoria, considering the map shown on from the Consultant I can see quite a lot more areas sectioned off within the map of Victoria, to vast for me to realise where all these forests and reserves are, how do I get to them, can campers go there, do they cost anything?

Victorian Regional Forests are the assets of Victoria and an asset assessment of each forest and reserve in each existing region should be mapped and monitored thoroughly so each ranger or administrator of their Forest Region knows exactly where a tree has fallen creating a habitat, increase in one species than another, water quality increased or decreased, fires and other data for collection. Drones, cameras on posts can monitor animals at night and during the day as I am certain there are other more scientific methods of monitoring data as volunteers are doing it too to protect forests and reserves from development which has threatened species of birdlife, mammals and natives especially when council officers go to spray weeds and spray the natives

as well because they are not trained to know the difference. Sensible management of more than 5 regions for all of Victoria is inadequate and shows the Government doesn't really care, how difficult it would be for any of those 5 regions to maintain an asset register of every living plant in any one forest. More regions more responsibility more volunteers are interested better planning more people care when they go camping, bush trails and stop quad bikes, four wheel drives and other means like horses, deer's which are destroying the existence of these native forests and reserves. If Budj Bim as Traditional owners have cared for it for thousands of years is now going to UNESCO status why aren't all the Victorian Regional Forests doing this, what protection do we need for our Regional Forests for the mammals, flora and fauna and birdlife to sustain their existence. Wetland areas within these forests for the survival of the forests and reserves.

Who is reporting their findings and who are they reporting them to, because I'm a Member of the Australian Citizen Science Association and I'm certain of the 309 projects on their website not one of them is current of 2019?

Where are the individual Victorian Regional forests within each of the five regions?

How will the Victorian Regional Forests communicate with the community who aren't Citizen Science, members of a community group or in government department jobs? Will it be by a newsletter in the local newspapers? Radio announcements, television through some sort of advertising on poster boards? How will I for instance know if I don't have a radio or television and can't afford to buy a newspaper and don't own a laptop or mobile? Might I suggest an article on the Forests as a Regular newsworthy for people who live in WEST region thank you considering this region seems to have

more than any other region, it would be nice to know what forest or reserve I'd like to take a walk in.

To be quite honest, I didn't know any of this information existed until I attended a workshop information forum in Dunkeld held by the Victoria Regional Forests to get opinions as 40 people were asked and only 5 attended I was surprised when the Victorian government representative who comes from ██████ asked what we each thought of the Victorian Regional Forests. Listening to the other four people advise they were interested in better signage, further from the forests to encourage people to visit them, camping sites with better amenities which were in the instance of toilets being biodegradable and recycled water tanks filtered I waited patiently for my turn to tell this public servant. When I explained to them the Victorian Regional Forests Agreement meant to me I said "To me the forests are the pH soil, water quality, fallen logs with fungus growing on them as habitats for spiders, insects which are eaten by the birdlife whether they live there or are migratory to the area, mammals, flora and fauna of all shapes and sizes, leaves, barks, roots, size of trees, old growth trees, canopy, height, width and depth of trees and the light reflecting from one tree to another, ferns as I talked about the trees I looked away from the government employer as one of the others said "Are you an artist?". "No." I said. "I just like forests, the quietness when no one else is there, listen to the sounds, the creeks, the birds, animals scattering and the wind in the leaves". "Wow, I've never thought of the forest as you describe it ██████ said another. Then the Portland Field Naturalists Inc. asked me to assist them with some information on the VRFA which was in 2018.

I sincerely wish the Victorian Government will not endorse the Consultant's Report as I believe a thousand reports would have a million different suggestions on how the Victorian Regional Forests need to be managed, I for one would not wait 20 years as

I suggest 2 years is enough time to make changes again, to keep in touch with the community, citizen scientists and reporting to locals in their area concerning their forests which many of the volunteers are caring for and for more funding to be made available just for environmental projects for native plantings to Shires, Shire Councils and Councils within Victoria.

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Dated 6 July 2019