

FOREST PROTECTION IS CRITICAL FOR CLIMATE POLICY



Fast Facts

Native forest protection is critical for effective climate policy

- The *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)* warns that strong, rapid and immediate cuts in emissions are needed to avoid irreversible climate collapse.¹
- **Ending native logging** in Australia would reduce total greenhouse gas emissions by **24%**.²
- **60%** of the total biomass of logged trees ends up burnt as onsite waste. **Ending native logging** would reduce these further emissions.³
- Reducing emissions alone is insufficient. Victoria's forests are some of the world's most carbon dense forests and we depend on their carbon sequestration and storage capabilities.⁴

Victorians want native forests protected and will vote accordingly

- 2018 Victorian state election saw swings towards candidates who were vocal on forest protection in marginal seats.⁵
- **92%** of Victorians think state forests should be places for wildlife, trees and nature to be protected; recreation activities; commercial tourism and safely storing carbon – not logging.⁶
- **75%** of respondents in marginal city seats (**Richmond, Prahran and Bentleigh**) think **Labor** is not doing enough to protect forests; **62%** of undecided voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports forest protection.⁷
- **83%** per cent of those in the bush do not support logging in native forests.⁸

Logging is a dead economic loss for Victoria

- In 2021, **VicForests** received **\$18 million** in government grants yet still posted a loss of **\$23 million**; in 2020 they posted a **\$7.4 million** loss.
- Nature-based outdoor activities add **\$6.2 billion per year** to the Victorian economy, supporting **71,000 jobs**.⁹
- Ending logging in **2020** rather than **2030** would save **\$192 million** of taxpayers' funds.¹⁰
- An investment of **\$5 million** is needed to create a single native logging job, compared to **\$574,000** for non-native logging and **\$222,000** for food, accommodation and services jobs.¹¹

Logging native forests increases and accelerates climate impacts by:

- Reducing the water in Melbourne's catchment by **15,000** megalitres a year (equivalent to the amount used by **250,000** people).¹²
- Increasing the risk of **more severe bushfires** with forest canopy damage by fire increased by **5 to 20%**.¹³
- Accelerating forest **ecosystem collapse** with threatened plant and animal species pushed towards **extinction**, such as the critically endangered **Leadbeater's Possum** and the endangered **Greater Glider**.¹⁴

Logging is not renewable or sustainable

- **66%** of Victoria's native vegetation has already been lost to land clearing.
- Less than **1.1%** of old growth **Mountain Ash** forest – critical arboreal wildlife habitat – remains.¹⁵
- Approximately **85%** of logged native forest goes to landfill after a short life as paper, packaging and pallets.¹⁶
- **50%** of logged **Mountain Ash** forests fail to grow back after logging, instead becoming dense fire prone paddocks.¹⁷

1. IPCC Working Group III, Mitigation of Climate Change (2022)

2. The Australian National University, Green Carbon – The role of natural forests in carbon storage (2008)

3. The Australian National University, Logged native forests mostly end up in landfill, not in buildings and furniture (2019)

4. IPCC Special Report: Global Warming of °C (2018)

5. The Guardian, The Victorian election roundup: how logging policy could fell Labor (2 Nov 2018)

6. ReachTEL polling (2016)

7. ReachTEL polling (2018)

8. ABC Gippsland, Native forest logging support low in regional Australia, leaked report shows (9 Dec 2018)

9. Outdoors Victoria, *Victoria's Nature Based Outdoor Economy* (2016)

10. The Guardian, *Ending logging in Victoria now would save taxpayers \$192m, budget office estimates* (2020)

11. PriceWaterhouseCoopers - *Rethinking Victoria's Approach to Forestry* (2016)

12. Science of Total Environment, Modelling water yields in response to logging and Representative Climate Futures (2018)

13. Nature Ecology & Evolution, Logging elevated the probability of high-severity fire in the 2019–20 Aus. forest fires (2022)

14. Australian Government Conservation Advice for *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri* and *Petauroides volans*

15. PNAS, Newly discovered landscape traps produce regime shifts in wet forests (2011)

16. The Australian National University, Logged native forests mostly end up in landfill, not in buildings and furniture (2019)

17. Blakers, *After the Logging – failing to regenerate Victoria's forests* (2022)



Ending logging is critical to First Nations rights and climate justice

- First Nations people have protected Country for at least **60,000 years** and have extensive knowledge on adapting to a changing climate.
- First Nations people will be disproportionately affected and are already experiencing existential threats from climate change – yet are excluded from leadership roles in climate discussions.¹⁸
- In November 2019, a statement from Elders and Traditional Owners of Gunnai, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Countries was sent to Premier Daniel Andrews calling for an end to logging on Country and protection of forests. **“We never gave permission to VicForests to destroy our precious forests and the cultural heritage contained within them.”**¹⁹
- Returning care of Country to Traditional Owners is critical to addressing the injustice of colonisation and mitigating catastrophic climate impacts.

Much of Victoria’s logging is illegal and regulations are being eroded

- Between 2009 to 2017 more than **300 reports** of breaches of the Code were submitted to the **Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)** and not a single breach was prosecuted.²⁰
- In 2019, a government commissioned report into **DELWP’s** failure to regulate logging found that they had **“neither the capability or capacity to achieve its objectives.”**²¹
- As of September 2022, there are currently **seven active court cases** in which local community groups are prosecuting the Victorian government’s logging agency **VicForests** for illegal logging.
- The Victorian government has repeatedly changed the **Timber Production Code** to make it harder for communities to take legal action against **VicForests**.
- Logging is listed as a threatening process under **Victoria’s Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act**, however habitat for threatened species continues to be logged even when those species are detected inside logging coupes.
- The Victorian government is enacting laws that threaten community members with a **\$21,000 fine or 12 months in jail** for surveying for threatened species, monitoring logging and/or protesting inside logging coupes.

Broken promises

- In the lead up to the 2014 election, **Labor** promised a new national park for the **Central Highlands**. Four days before the election **Labor** handed the decision over to a taskforce who eventually abandoned the process.²²
- In November 2019, **Labor** promised to ban logging in old growth forest, however old growth logging continues and requests for mapping the 90,000 ha of “protected” forests have never been fulfilled.²³
- In 2021, **Labor** announced new national parks for forests in Victoria’s west. Since then logging has continued and over **170** new logging coupes have been added to the proposed **Wombat-Lerderberg National Park**.

Protection of native forests is long overdue - logging must end now

- The Victorian Forest Alliance is calling for the **immediate end to logging** in Victoria’s native forests, in line with the science and the wishes of First Nations Elders and Traditional Owners.
- The Alliance encourages candidates and climate groups to make an **immediate end to logging** a principal part of their climate policy and will champion and support those who do.
- The Alliance will also support candidates and groups who call for **no new logging contracts** to be signed and an **end to logging by Jan 2024** at the latest.

¹⁸ Statement from Elders and Traditional Owners of Gunnai, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Countries on Our Forests, c/o Victorian Traditional Owners Land Justice Group (2019)

¹⁹ The Conversation, Indigenous peoples across the globe are uniquely equipped to deal with the climate crisis (2022)

²⁰ Goongerah Environment Centre, *Lawless Logging: an investigation into breaches of the regulatory framework* (2017)

²¹ Brockington, Finegan and Rozen, *Independent Review of Timber Harvesting Regulation* (2019)

²² The Age, State election 2014: Labor’s environment policies revealed (2014)

²³ Goongerah Environment Centre, Victorian government breaks old growth forest promise (2022)



For more information go to www.victorianforestalliance.org.au
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