

PROTECT OUR FORESTS

THE GREENS PLAN TO END NATIVE FOREST LOGGING, TRANSITION TO A SUSTAINABLE PLANTATION INDUSTRY AND CREATE THE GREAT FOREST NATIONAL PARK & EMERALD LINK

Victorians value our native forests. We love to escape the demands of everyday life to explore this unique and diverse environment. Native forests provide clean air and water and store enormous amounts of carbon. They underpin local communities which rely on tourism to create jobs. Yet they are being logged to make paper.

Forests on Melbourne's fringe and all across regional Victoria are being logged at an alarming rate. In fact, Victoria has the highest rate of logging in all of Australia. Five MCG's worth of native forest are being logged in Victoria every day. 87%ⁱ of which goes into woodchip and pulp, to make Reflex ultra white copy paper.

Such rapid logging has pushed Victoria's Mountain Ash forests, located in the Central Highlands on the doorstep of Melbourne, to the brink of collapse, causing it to be listed as critically endangered by the IUCNⁱⁱ. These forests contain the world's highest amount of stored carbonⁱⁱⁱ and provide 98%^{iv} of Greater Melbourne's water supply.

The forests in East Gippsland support some of the finest remaining high-conservation forest biodiversity. They contain rainforests, pristine rivers, waterfalls, rare plants and animals. Despite this, VicForests have repeatedly been found guilty of illegal logging in some of the most sensitive and spectacular parts of East Gippsland.

79 native species rely on Victoria's forests for their habitat. This includes species like our State Faunal Emblem the critically endangered Leadbeater's Possum, the Greater Glider and Sooty Owl. Many of these animals rely on tree hollows which take over 100 years to form.

Right across Victoria, from the Strathbogies, the Rubicon Valley, Wombat State Forest to the Strzelekis, communities are calling for an end to native forest logging as it puts their communities at risk.

Native forests underpin many local communities who rely on tourism to boost their economies. Tourism and hospitality

operators depend on forests for their income. Logging has impacted many small businesses who can't operate near or next to logged forest. A strong tourism industry will create a boost for much needed jobs in regional Victoria.

In fact, research conducted using an environmental economic accounting model devised by the United Nations has shown that Tourism can contribute a return of \$353 per hectare; Water contributes \$2,023 per hectare; Agriculture contributes \$2,667 per hectare; and Native Forest Logging provides only \$29 per hectare^{iv}.

If the timber and paper industries continue to be dependent on logging native forests, they too will collapse by the mid-2020s. All native forest logging and dependent jobs will be lost as a result and there will be no native forest industry at all. That's why a transition to sustainable plantations is so important.

Ending native forest logging is the right decision to make for our native species, our climate, air and water, our tourism and logging operators and the taxpayer's wallet.

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OUR PLAN

The Greens are campaigning for an end to logging of Victoria's native forests and a transition to sustainable plantation timber. The remaining intact forests should be protected for future generations.

To achieve this, The Victorian Greens will:

- **Create the Great Forest National Park in the Central Highlands and the Emerald Link in East Gippsland to conserve native forests and the many endangered species that live in them.**

Wood supply is running out. Something needs to be done now, not just for the environment, but to ensure job security and a viable timber industry into the future. The Victorian timber and paper industries need to complete the transition to sustainable plantations. The Victorian Greens have developed a plan to do just that. We will:

- Repeal the *Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996* to end the guaranteed supply of our native forests to make copy paper, and assist the Maryvale Pulp Mill transition 100% of its supply chain to post-consumer material and sustainable plantation pulp-logs.
- Provide financial assistance for small, family-owned mills to retool so they can use plantation logs instead of logs from native forests.
- Retool the State-owned Heyfield Mill such that it can operate efficiently and at sustainable levels. Sell the mill back to the private sector. The State Government doesn't need to be in the timber industry.
- Work with the industry to transition jobs out of native forest into sustainable plantations and other relevant sectors.
- Reverse government policy, established in 2009, of asserting that the discredited Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) is equivalent in sustainability to the internationally-approved Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification.
- Work with the Commonwealth Government and other States to strengthen the timber plantation sector across Australia.

A SHADY DEAL

Our forests are logged by the Victorian Government's very own logging agency, VicForests. They have received millions of dollars in grants and subsidies yet have only returned \$2,517,000 in dividends to the taxpayers of Victoria since 2007.^v In fact, VicForests continues to knowingly make a loss of \$5.5 million^{vi} per annum logging East Gippslands' forests. It's costing taxpayers money.

Monitoring of all logging operations, and compliance of environmental laws are conducted both via VicForests, and the Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Furthermore, the current Labor Government spent \$61 million buying the failing Heyfield mill; pushing small mill operators to the brink of collapse. Time again, it's a clear case of the fox in charge of the hen house.

Australian Paper's Maryvale mill, owned by the Japanese company Nippon, have a legislated supply agreement with the Victorian Government until 2030 with the Victorian Government to receive woodchips made from our native forests at a heavily discounted price. It's used in their Australian Paper and Reflex Paper ultra white brands of A4 copy paper. This outdated legislated guarantee fails to factor in the 450,000 hectares of forest burnt in the 2009 bushfires. If native forests can't be supplied, Maryvale receives compensation from the Government and is a key contributing factor to the dwindling supply and pressure on our forests.

To make matters worse, the owners of the Maryvale mill, Japanese company Nippon Paper, export plantation timber from Western Victoria when they could be using it here instead of destroying native forests. For too long, the Victorian Government has given Australian Paper a free pass.

It's all round poor governance and an industry that's hanging onto bad practice and refuses to change.

Our forests are worth more than paper.

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FINANCIAL COSTING

The Greens will have a fully costed election platform. Our policies will be submitted to the Parliamentary Budget Office for costing.

To save our forests, our plan would provide:

- \$26 million to establish the Great Forest National Park (GFNP)^{vii}.
- \$11.3 million per year for management of the GFNP (45.2 million over four years)^{vii}.
- \$20 million to establish the Emerald Link.
- \$10 million per year for management of the Emerald Link.
- \$10 million for package to retool small, family-owned timber mills in regional Victoria to handle plantation timber.
- \$5 million package for retooling and downsizing Heyfield Mill.
- \$100 million investment in new FSC certified plantations in Gippsland to secure future timber supply, and investigations into freight infrastructure improvements to get plantation timber from Western Victoria to Gippsland.
- Conversion of VicForests from a logging company to a reforestation/afforestation agency (cost neutral, as ending logging operations will greatly reduce operational costs).

Total: \$216.2 million

These expenses would be offset by:

- Rebadging the existing \$110 million commitment for plantations in Gippsland (none of which has been spent).
- Selling the Government's stake in Heyfield Mill. Purchase for \$61 million, likely sale value \$20-\$25 million once downsized.

This proposal would be administered by DEDJTR, Department of Agriculture and DELWP.

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