



Media Release - National Threatened Species Day, 7 September 2017
Report reveals 27 unlawful native forest logging operations

To mark National Threatened Species Day, a coalition of environment groups has released a damning report that Friends of the Earth says provides evidence of a systemic failure of the Labor government to enforce threatened species protection laws in native forests subject to logging.

The *Lawless logging* report prepared by Friends of the Earth, Goongerah Environment Centre and Fauna and Flora Research Collective details 27 logging operations carried out by state owned logging agency VicForests, that have breached legal protections for threatened wildlife and protected rainforest since the Andrews Labor government was elected.

All 27 cases of logging that the report details were reported to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning by community groups over the last three years. Friends of the Earth says these community groups have been doing the job the Department should be doing and are acting as unofficial regulators of the logging industry.

“There has been a systemic failure by VicForests to comply with threatened species and rainforest protections and a systemic failure by DELWP, as the regulator, to enforce compliance,” said Friends of the Earth spokesperson Ed Hill.

“It should not be left up to the community to find threatened species at the 11th hour before their habitat is bulldozed and pulped for cheap copy paper. The Department are outsourcing their responsibilities to the community whilst turning a blind eye to appalling logging practices that are breaching legislative protections and fast tracking the extinction of forest wildlife,” said Ed Hill.

“This report should serve as a wake up call to Environment Minister Lily D’Ambrosio that her Department is failing in their responsibilities to protect threatened wildlife and enforce the laws that the government’s logging agency must follow,” said Ed Hill.

“The Department of Environment has proved itself to be weak, ineffectual and lacking the will to appropriately enforce compliance, therefore a fully independent statutory body should be established to take over DELWP’s regulatory role.”

“The Department consistently defends the interests of the logging industry, which is completely out of step with their responsibilities to enforce the logging laws and protect threatened species. Forest dependent species are paying the price, under a dysfunctional and broken regulatory system that ignores scientific evidence and places the interests of VicForests logging above the law,” said Ed Hill

“Victoria’s threatened species are in crisis, the government’s own scientists have warned that forest species such as the Leadbeater’s Possum and Greater Glider are facing extinction and need urgent protection from logging.”

“The Labor government must act to protect Victoria’s native forests and threatened wildlife from logging by declaring the Great Forest National Park and new reserves in East Gippsland that protect the regions high conservation value forests and rainforest.”

The report calls on the Andrews labor government to act on four key recommendations.

- 1. Immediately prosecute VicForests in the courts for logging that has breached the Code of Practice, such as those detailed in the report.**
- 2. Establish an independent forestry regulator to enforce compliance with the Code of Practice and ensure that threatened species habitat is at a minimum given the legislative protection afforded to it. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has proved itself to be weak, ineffectual and lacking the will to appropriately enforce compliance, therefore a fully independent statutory body should be established to take over DELWP's regulatory role.**
- 3. End logging's legal exemption from federal environment laws by not renewing the Regional Forest Agreements. Place the logging industry on an equal footing with all other industries and assess all logging operations under the federal Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act**
- 4. Establish new parks and reserves across eastern Victoria, including the Great Forest National Park and East Gippsland's Emerald Link to provide the required habitat needs for forest dependent threatened species to persist into the future.**

Media contact: Ed Hill – 0414 199 645 / ed.hill@foe.org.au

Events: Friends of the Earth will have mobilized volunteers to personally deliver the report to ten Victorian MP's offices throughout the day, including Victorian Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio (member for Mill Park), Richard Wynne (Member for Richmond), James Merlino (Member for Monbulk), Jane Garrett (member for Brunswick), Wade Noonan (member for Williamstown), Vicki Ward (member for Eltham), Treasurer Tim Pallas (member for Werribee), Robin Scott (Member for Preston), Martin Foley (member for Albert Park)

People will gather at the steps of Victorian Parliament House from 5:30pm today to call on the Victorian government to act on the recommendations of the report.