



Media Release - August 1st 2019, Goongerah Environment Centre & The Wilderness Society

Gov't survey shows public support forest protection, not logging

- Survey shows Victorian public say future of industry is in plantations
- Victorians support protecting forests and improved forest recreation opportunities
- Results show no need to continue with failed Regional Forest Agreements

[The government survey report can be downloaded here.](#)

Results of a public survey conducted by the Victorian government show overwhelming support for protecting native forests from logging and provide the Andrews Labor government with a strong platform to protect forests and transition jobs out of the native forest logging sector, say environment groups.

The survey was phase one in the Victorian government's engagement with the public as part of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) modernisation program.

In 2018, rather than extend the bi-lateral RFAs for another 20 years as has occurred elsewhere, the Victorian government instead provided a short-term extension in order to review the effectiveness of the state's RFAs.

Protecting native forests from logging was identified by 52% of respondents as being the most important way of improving forests for all Victorians, whilst 42% identified protecting and restoring biodiversity to the forests as the most important action for government to take.

In response to the question 'What forests should be used for?':

- 44.6% chose 'conserving plants and animals' as their number one choice;
- 7% of respondents chose 'providing jobs and economic benefits from timber and wood products' as their number one choice.

A weighted score was assigned to each choice for this question.

- 'Conserving plants and animals' scored 9.5
- 'Maintaining water and catchment health' scored 8.4
- 'Maintaining natural landscapes scored' 7.9
- 'Storing carbon and mitigating climate change' scored 7.5
- 'Providing jobs and economic benefits from timber and wood products' recorded the lowest weighted score with 3.2.

In response to the question 'What concerns you most about the way we are currently managing our forests?':

- 56.1% nominated 'insufficient protection of flora and fauna'
- 7.1 % selected 'loss of jobs or income for people'
- 6.4% chose 'limited opportunities for accessing resources forests produce'.

The online survey was completed by 2,824 respondents while data was also collected at 126 events across regional Victoria, a Forest Youth Symposium and from written submissions.

Goongerah Environment Centre (GECO) and The Wilderness Society say the survey results show strong support for the Andrews government to act decisively to protect native forests and put in place a plan to transition the native forest logging industry into plantations, non-timber sources of fibre and sustainable jobs.

Ed Hill, spokesperson for GECO said: “The Victorian government says that the data collected from this survey will inform a state forest management strategy. The results tell us very clearly that such a strategy must be focused on protecting forests from logging and transitioning jobs into plantations and other forest based industries.”

Amelia Young, spokesperson for the Wilderness Society said: “The RFAs have comprehensively failed the environment, the logging industry, and the public. The survey results show the Victorian people know this and that they expect change.”

Amelia Young said: “When the Victorian RFAs expire in March 2020, they must simply be discontinued. There is no need to continue with this regulatory relic that gives native forest loggers an exemption from national environment law.”

Amelia Young said: “The RFA survey results show that Victorians want their forests better protected and that they also want increased opportunities for recreation. The Great Forest National Park and Emerald Link proposals will support both outcomes by protecting the most important areas of forest and creating a playground for tourism, recreation and decent, safe and secure jobs.”

Amelia Young said: “For too long the Andrews government has dragged the chain when it comes to making urgently required changes to forest management. The current process to modernise forest management provides government with an excellent opportunity to finally get it right by protecting high environmental value forests from logging whilst providing for the much needed transition of the logging industry onto a sustainable footing in plantations and non timber sources of fibre.”

Ed Hill said: “We are living in the age of extinction and in a climate crisis that is worsening each and every day, to continue to log Victoria’s high conservation value native forests and endangered wildlife habitat is out of step with the 21st century. The longer that Daniel Andrews delays protecting our forests the more damage is done. Future generations tomorrow will bear the brunt, or reap the rewards, of the decisions that our leaders make today.”

Ed Hill said: “The RFA survey results provide a really strong platform for the Andrews government to expand parks and reserves to better protect forests and wildlife. Creating the Great Forest National Park in the Central Highlands and the Emerald Link proposal in East Gippsland must be a priority under any new forest management regimes, whether renewed RFAs or otherwise.”

Media contact: Ed Hill, Goongerah Environment Centre campaign co-ordinator - 0414 199 645
Amelia Young, Wilderness Society Victoria campaigns manager - 0404 074 577