

Protecting Victoria's Forests

What can we do about logging loopholes?



**ENVIRONMENT
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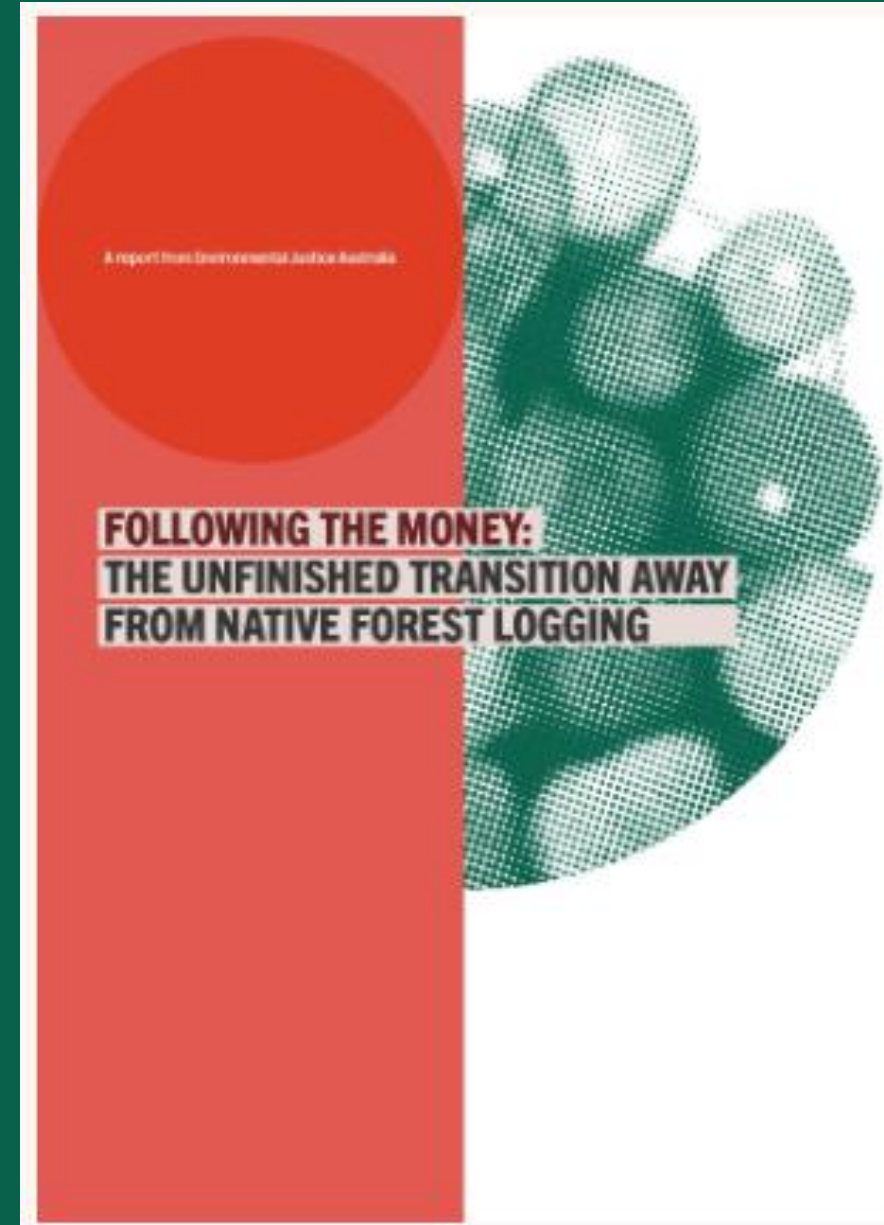


We acknowledge the
Traditional Owners of the
lands and waters where
we are each joining from
and pay our respects to
Elders past and present.



Overview

1. What's happened
2. What needs to happen
3. What's next





Timeline

The transition away from native forest logging in Victoria

6 NOVEMBER 2019

Victorian Forestry Plan announced, including commitment to end native forest logging by 2030.

SUMMER 2019 - 2020

Black Summer bushfires severely affected Victoria's forests, killing and displacing millions of animals and significantly reducing the availability of native forest timber. The fires followed a series of major bushfires that had already affected forest biodiversity and timber supply.

2020 - 2022

Despite bushfire impacts, declining timber availability and ongoing legal challenges, VicForests entered into 14 major timber supply contracts worth more than \$10 million each. During this period, it also replaced expiring harvest and haulage contracts with new agreements extending to 2024.¹²

2020 - 2022

VicForests incurred substantial compensation costs associated with failing to meet contracted timber supply commitments.¹³

2021 - 2022

Major Federal Court rulings restricted VicForests logging operations following findings that VicForests has failed to comply with laws protecting threatened species.¹⁴

JULY 2020

Bunnings announced it would stop selling timber from Victorian native forests.¹⁵

OCT 2022 - NOV 2022

The Supreme Court ordered logging to cease in parts of East Gippsland and the Central Highlands following findings that VicForests had failed to adequately protect Greater Gliders, Yellow-bellied Gliders and Tree Geebung.¹⁶



23 MAY 2023

Victorian government announced native forest logging would end by 1 January 2024, six years earlier than planned, alongside a major transition funding package.

1 JANUARY 2024

Commercial native forest logging under the VicForests system officially ceased in Victoria.

FEBRUARY 2024

VicForests brought forward the end of Forest Produce Licences that had been due to expire on 30 June 2024, citing risks to threatened species in Victoria's west.¹⁸

1 JULY 2024

VicForests formally ceased to exist.

JANUARY 2025

Victoria's Regional Forest Agreements expired, removing the availability of the Regional Forest Agreement exemption under the EPBC Act.

NOVEMBER 2025

The Victorian Parliament legislated three new national parks in the state's central west, fulfilling a separate pre-existing commitment unrelated to the native forest logging transition.

2024 - 2026

Community observers documented repeated transport of large native forest hardwood logs from Tasmania and NSW into Victoria including to mills that had received transition funding to exit native forest wood sourcing, while continuing to process native forest timber.

NATIVE FOREST TIMBER CONTINUES TO MOVE THROUGH VICTORIAN SUPPLY CHAINS AFTER THE END OF THE VICFORESTS MODEL

WHAT ENDED

Native forest logging on Victorian public land under the VicForests model

VicForests operations

The Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 (Vic)

Victoria's Regional Forest Agreements

7 of 21 mills closed (3 unknown)

Opal Australian Paper no longer sourcing from native forests through VicForests

WHAT REMAINS

Native forest timber sources and native forest logging in other forms:

- Private land logging
- Forest Produce Licences and permits
- Salvage and storm-recovery logging
- Infrastructure and land management clearing
- FFMV activity
- Interstate native forest logging (Tasmania and New South Wales)
- Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996



Transport and haulage networks

- Forestry haulage contractors
- Interstate freight and shipping routes
- Existing timber transport infrastructure



Victorian mills and processing infrastructure

- Hardwood mills
- Existing supply and commercial relationships



Timber processing and products

- Building, and appearance-grade timber
- Timber products sold into domestic and export markets



Public funding and transition support

- Transition grants and industry support
- Compensation payments
- Worker support programs
- Government-backed contracts and funding arrangements





Recommendations

1. Permanently protect Victoria's native forests
2. Close logging loopholes
3. Improve transparency and accountability for transition funding
4. Apply the lessons from Victoria in Tasmania and New South Wales
5. End federal government support for native forest logging



Legal logging loopholes

1. Logging on private land
2. Fire management activities
3. Salvage logging
4. Forest Produce Licences
5. Interstate supply chains (e.g. importing native forest logs from Tas and NSW).

FORESTS ACT 1958 - SECT 21

Special powers of Secretary and Parks Victoria

(1) Subject to this Act the Secretary may—

- (a) permit the taking or converting of ~~any timber or other~~ forest produce in any State forest at not less than such minimum rates or amounts as are prescribed by or under this Act;
- ~~(b) take and sell any timber or forest produce in any State forest;~~
- ~~(c) convert any such timber into logs sawn timber or merchantable articles and sell the same;~~
- ~~(d) convert any such forest produce into merchantable articles and sell the same;~~
- (e) construct and maintain roads tracks and tramways and other works for the transport of plantation timber, forest produce and merchantable articles and purchase tramways and other works for such purposes and operate tramways or works so constructed or purchased and purchase rent or charter and use vehicles and vessels with the necessary motive power;
- (f) construct purchase or rent and operate sawmills and other mills and kilns and depots for seasoning plantation timber and purchase or rent machinery and plant for the purposes of this section; and
- (g) purchase cattle and depasture them on State forests and sell such cattle.

[...]

Insert –

'**plantation timber**' means timber taken from managed stands of trees of either native or exotic species, planted or sown primarily for timber harvesting operation purposes.

NATIONAL PARKS ACT 1975 - SECT 44A

Offence to cut or take away fallen or felled trees

(3A) A person must not sell fallen or felled trees that the person has cut and taken away in a park.

Penalty: [INSERT]

<https://envirojustice.org.au/publication/submission-to-engage-victoria-on-the-future-of-victorias-state-forests/>

FORESTS ACT 1958 - SECT 62C

Secretary may enter into agreements and arrangements relating to the prevention and suppression of fires and recovery from fires

(1) The Secretary may enter into an agreement or arrangement with any person or body in Victoria or elsewhere—

- (a) for assistance in the prevention and suppression of fire and recovery from fire;
- (b) relating to research into the prevention and suppression of fire and recovery from fire;
- (c) for training in relation to the prevention and suppression of fire and recovery from fire;
- (d) for the supply of fire fighting equipment and apparatus and systems used in the prevention and suppression of fire and recovery from fire;
- (e) for the provision by the Secretary of goods or services relating to the prevention and suppression of fire and recovery from fire.

(3C) A person must not sell, or offer for sale, any timber or forest produce that is cut in or removed from a State forest in undertaking an activity under an agreement or arrangement under subsection (1) or (2).

Penalty: [INSERT]"

Insert new section 96AB –

FORESTS ACT - SECT 96AB

Offence to sell fallen or felled trees

(1) A person must not sell fallen or felled trees that the person has cut and taken away in a State forest.

Penalty: [INSERT]

Recommendation 5

Change relevant legislation and regulations to prevent the return of large-scale commercial native timber harvesting in state forests. This should not limit Traditional Owner or the government's forest and fire management activities.



FIGURE 15
Log truck carrying large hardwood logs consistent with native forest origin travelling through Hobart, Tasmania, 1 May 2025.



FIGURE 16
The same log truck entering the Powelltown mill, Victoria, 2 May 2025.

<https://envirojustice.org.au/publication/following-the-money/>



FIGURE 6
Collated photographs from Burnley Tunnel traffic cameras showing log truck movements during a single week, 23-27 March 2026.

What's changing?

- RFA exemption is ending. From 1 July 2027, forestry operations in NSW, Tas and WA will be subject to the EPBC Act.
- State and Federal Governments are currently considering assessment and approval pathway options for after 1 July 2027.
- New environmental safeguards will apply, e.g. National Environmental Standards.



THANK YOU



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