



REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT JOINT ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY REPORT: MELBOURNE

Cloud
Catcher

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report has been independently produced by Cloud Catcher.

In June 2019, as part of a broader program of engagement on Regional Forest Agreements, the Australian and Victorian governments ran a series of public consultation and engagement events - independently facilitated by Cloud Catcher. Following the events, we have produced six summary reports – one for each of the five Victorian RFA regions and one for Melbourne, where the engagements applied to all Victorian RFA regions. These reports offer a summary of the key themes and messages we heard along with a full set of the transcribed data gathered at the events. They have been produced soon after the engagement events took place, to assist with the transparency of this process.

Public consultation for this phase of engagement has now closed. For more information on the Regional Forest Agreement engagement process contact: future.rfa@delwp.vic.gov.au or see: <https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/futureforests>

For more on Cloud Catcher see: www.cloudcatcher.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of land and water. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Victorian Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life.

CONTEXT

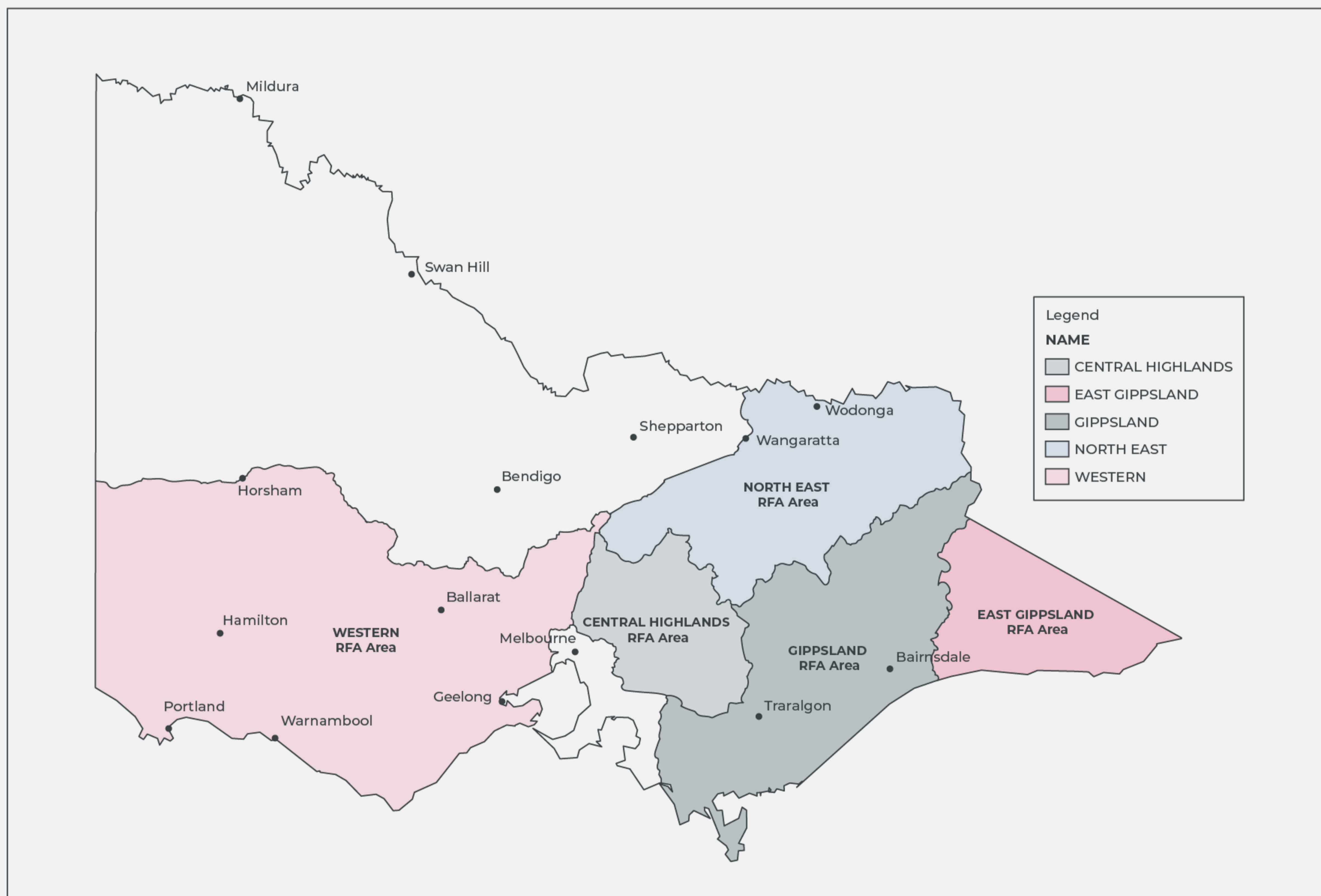
In instigating this engagement process on the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements, the Victorian and Australian governments have acknowledged the significant changes that have occurred since the RFAs were first signed 20 years ago, including the impacts of climate change, extreme weather events (including drought and bushfires), scientific and technological progress, advances in our understanding of forests and ecosystems, changing forest-based industries and opportunities, and the recognition of the rights of Victoria's Traditional Owners to partner in land management and seek economic and cultural opportunities.

In that context, the way we manage and make decisions about forests is of critical importance – for our natural environments, for our economies and for the future of our society more generally.

BACKGROUND

About the Victorian regional forest agreements

There are currently five Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) between the State of Victoria and the Commonwealth of Australia. In place until 31 March 2020, the RFAs stated aim is to establish a framework for the provision of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system, ecologically sustainable management and use of forests, and the long-term stability of forests and forest industries within five Victorian RFA regions.



About the joint Australian and Victorian government RFA engagement

The Victorian and Australian Governments agreed to work towards the modernisation and extension of the five Victorian RFAs before their expiry on 31 March 2020. This process is intended to reflect changes that have occurred in the 20 years since RFAs were first established. An Independent Consultation Paper produced by Dr William Jackson¹ provided an overview of the performance of the RFAs to date, identified key areas for improvement, and posed a series of overarching questions. Those questions formed the basis for public consultation and engagement with Victorian communities.

The public consultation involved:

- A two-month online survey and public submission period via Engage Victoria
- A series of face-to-face engagement events - drop-in sessions, workshops and one-on-one meetings held across each of the five Victorian RFA Regions

The Victorian and Australian Government jointly undertook face-to-face engagement with Victorian stakeholders and communities in June 2019 to obtain feedback on potential improvements to the Victorian RFAs, to inform the modernisation process. This series of Summary Reports provides a summary of the feedback received during the face-to-face consultation and engagement events only. Feedback collected through all RFA consultation activities - including the online survey and public submissions along with findings from the contemporary assessments of forest values - will inform the modernisation of the RFAs.

1. <https://engage.vic.gov.au/future-of-our-forests/rfa-consultation-paper>

OUR ROLE

Cloud Catcher provided independent facilitation for the face-to-face engagement events - community drop-in sessions, workshops and one-on-one meetings. Our role was to create a context wherein community members could have their questions answered and State and Commonwealth government representatives could listen deeply to their views.

We see our independence as important, particularly on a topic with significant community passion which involves two levels of government. To ensure community views are taken into account during government decision-making, we need opportunities for members of the public to have their say and to be heard.

WHO WE ARE

CLOUD CATCHER

Facilitation for a fair & flourishing future

- We understand the power of great facilitation and meaningful moments for creating change. We have worked with people across all sectors and in many different contexts. This includes environmental groups and political organisations, local, state and Federal government agencies and a range of industries in the private sector.
- We acknowledge that the issues we face are intersectional and systemic. This stuff runs deep. And wide. It's not just the actions of 'bad people' that lead to bad outcomes; most people in bad systems will tend to make unhealthy choices. As far as possible, we aim our work at those systemic roots - in the way we work, the projects we accept and the relationships we cultivate.

Facilitators and report authors: Matt Wicking, Lina Patel, Tom Henderson

OVERVIEW

The topic of forest management is complex and is deeply important to many and diverse communities across the state. After all, people's livelihoods and precious places, identities and hometowns, cultures and futures are all in the mix when we talk about forests and the way they are managed.

This is one of six Summary Reports produced independently by Cloud Catcher to present the key messages government representatives received as we travelled with them across Victoria. If you were to read all comments in all six reports, you would see some consistent themes coming through. One such theme was a notable sense of distrust in the process of decision-making around forest management. It was common for people to call for more accountability, reliability and transparency in the way the RFAs and Victoria's forests are managed. People wanted parties to the RFA to be held to what is agreed and repercussions if outcomes are not met. Many participants also called for more science-based decision making and for RFAs to be more adaptable, particularly in the face of growing issues such as climate change and fire, which pose new and significant large-scale threats to communities, natural places and livelihoods.

Input came from a diverse range of voices - community members and recreational forest users, tourism industry representatives, environmental groups, local government, water and catchment management authorities, timber industry, apiculture and other commercial forest users. Accordingly, ideas for improvement to the existing model were diverse. They included: moving away from clear-felling in native forests; supporting the transition to plantation timbers and alternative fibre; supporting other forest-based and adjacent industries and activities including apiculture, forest-based tourism and hunting to manage invasive animal populations - and much more. Across the state many environmental groups called for the cancellation of the Regional Forest Agreements altogether - or for very significant modifications. Similarly consistently, the strongest sentiment that came up from the timber industry, regardless of location, was a desire for greater stability and certainty.

To better understand how these and many other perspectives played out in this particular region, read on below. For other regions, see the relevant Summary Report. For more information, go to:
<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/futureforests>
or contact: future.rfa@delwp.vic.gov.au

OUR APPROACH

Our approach has been to take the transcribed session outputs – over 3,000 opinions and comments from community members and stakeholders – and to synthesise and summarise them to identify key topics under three main consultation themes. The main section of this report represents those topics in order of how common they were at events across this region. And Appendix B contains the raw data as it was shared by community members and stakeholders.

We make no recommendations here. We have attempted to reflect the main opinions and attitudes from each region as clearly and plainly as possible. In some cases, directly opposing views of reality were held by different groups in the same region. By including them here, we're reporting other people's opinions and their perspectives on their lived experience, not making a judgement as to whether people's ideas are accurate.

The events that this report is based on are only one part of a larger engagement process. Our understanding is that the same event outputs we have reviewed will be collated along with online submissions and survey responses as part of the broader synthesis to be used for decision-making and policy development purposes. We have no involvement with feedback collected via online survey and submissions through Engage Victoria and no influence over the way this or any other data is used.

MELBOURNE SUMMARY

MELBOURNE

Below is a summary of the views and opinions gathered at events held in the across all five RFA regions - as shared at workshops and meetings in Melbourne.

Comments are listed in order of their frequency. That means those that appear first in each bullet list tended to be most commonly captured on reporting templates at events. Those that appear later were less common.

Whilst Melbourne isn't covered by an RFA, the events in this location related to all Victorian RFAs. They included a series of one-on-one meetings with environmental and timber group representatives and three workshops for the following stakeholder groups:

- Timber and other commercial forest industries;
- Environmental NGOs; and
- Recreation users.

For a full list of events by each region, along with attendee numbers, see Appendix A.

All sessions were framed around a set of three broad questions:

1. What changes have you seen in the region?
2. What should the Victorian RFAs aim to achieve over the next 20 years?
3. What are the potential improvements you think should be made? In each section below, topics that we heard in response to these questions are listed in order of their frequency. That means those that appear first in each bullet list tended to be most commonly captured on reporting templates at events. Those that appear later were less common.

This small selection of quotes from the Melbourne events provides a sense of some of the ideas shared through this process. For the full list of community feedback for this region, see Appendix B.

- “Define/implement a framework to guide in application of triple-bottom-line so that economic, social and environmental values are equally valued and done so in a transparent way and underpinned by peer-review science.”
- “Remove blanket exemption from Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act”
- “Review access for recreational users and nature-based tourism – so appropriate access is provided in a changing environment (e.g. seasonal closures) and as areas recover from disturbances or major weather events.”

In each section below, topics that we heard in response to these questions are listed in order of their frequency. Those that appear first in each bullet list were most commonly captured on reporting templates at events. Those that appear later were less common.

CHANGES IN VICTORIA

Participants were asked to share what changes they have seen in Victoria in the 20 years since the previous RFAs were signed. Some of the most common experiences shared were:

- All stakeholder groups noted that RFAs haven't met their objectives. Timber industry bodies believe regulations and changes by government have eroded the original intent of the RFAs. Environmental organisations believe the exemption from the EPBC Act has resulted in negative impacts on ecosystem health. There was general criticism of the implementation of the CAR reserve system.
- Reviews of RFAs have been late and haven't resulted in any change.
- There has been a decline in forest industries despite strong demand for Victorian wood products. Government has not upheld the 'no net loss' clause resulting in a reduction of harvestable areas. There has been a decline in wood availability across all types in all regions.
- Industry has lost expertise due to the uncertain conditions. The combined inability to attract new talent and an ageing workforce has resulted in the need to bring in expertise from overseas.
- Environmental groups have noticed a move towards more intensive practices like clear-felling and higher occurrences of failed regeneration of

logged areas. The scale and intensity of the logging practices are unsustainable.

- Forest users have noticed a loss of biodiversity, with more species being listed as endangered.
- Environmental groups and recreation users have noticed a change in the forest composition and condition, such as a loss of hollow-bearing trees, an imbalance in age class, less mixed forested areas and an increase in invasive plants and animals.
- Forest users have seen more people using forests, including an increase in illegal activity. There has been a reduction in access for recreational use. There has been a reduction in staff working in forests and parks, resulting in a greater reliance on recreational users for maintenance of tracks, particularly in areas further from urban centres.
- The timber industry is facing challenges to its social licence, with lack of understanding from the public about the industry, a decrease in community support and misinformation.
- There has been an increase in bushfires resulting in impacts on wood supply and biodiversity and an increase in reliance of timber industry skills and equipment for firefighting.
- Industry noted that there have been improvements in safety and lower rates of injury.

IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE

Participants were asked a series of questions under three key themes to elicit their suggested improvements to the RFAs:

1. Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management
2. Long Term Stability of Forests and Forest Industries
3. Governance and Management of Victoria's Forests.

All participant responses for this region (Appendix B) are summarised below. These are not quotes but summarised lists of topics that arose, in order of their frequency. Those that appear first in each bullet list were most commonly captured on reporting templates at events. Those that appear later were less common.

Theme 1: Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management

- Revisit the current practice of pre-harvest surveys - a shift from coupe-level to landscape-scale assessments with longer lead times.
- Find a greater balance towards the economic and social values rather than the current emphasis on environmental values.
- Recognise Traditional Owner rights in forest management planning, by establishing genuine partnerships with Traditional Owners with regards to RFAs including increased funding for Traditional Owner engagement.
- Make forest health and biodiversity the main priority of the RFAs to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.
- Remove the exemption from the EPBC act to ensure the forestry industry is assessed like other industries.
- Improve forest composition through the protection old growth and uneven-aged forests.
- Increase protection of forested areas through the strengthening of the CAR reserve system and a move from informal to formal reserves to protect endangered species and ecosystems.
- Prepare, and act on, species Action Statements and Recovery Plans in a timely manner.
- Adopt Traditional Owner knowledge and cultural burns more broadly for fire management.
- Acknowledge the financial and non-financial values and contributions of other forest uses beyond the timber industry, including tourism, recreation, apiculture and the health and wellbeing value of forests to society.

Theme 2: Long Term Stability of Forests & Forest Industries

- Provide security and certainty of supply from both State and Federal government with a clear policy to support the timber industry in the face of growing demand. Early communication on supply forecasts and honouring the 'no net loss' principle through enforceable provisions.
- Factor in climate change to policy decisions regarding timber supply and adequacy of reserves.
- Apply known methods of accounting to value carbon storage of forests with a view to generating income.

- Balance all forest uses equally by accounting for lost carbon and emissions generated by logging to determine the true cost of logging and the true value of forests.
- Factor in the impact of forestry activity on available water flowing into catchments.
- Transition to plantations, explore private native forestry and provide greater clarity around the regulatory requirements of plantations.
- Provide education and information to the broader public about the industry to improve public perception and understanding.
- Support recreational users and nature-based tourism as a way of supporting regional communities and acknowledge that recreation and apiculture are not incompatible with timber harvesting.
- Provide appropriate access for recreation in response to natural events and changing climate.
- Improve communication about the role of RFAs and how they work.
- Encourage research and innovation into new sources of timber (salvage logging), new sources of fibre (hemp), new products (composite timber) and new uses of forestry by-products (biomass and biofuels).
- Support domestic processing and value-adding of timber and invest in training to retain skills.
- Stop the clear-felling of forests.
- Acknowledge the role that the timber industry plays in firefighting.

Theme 3: Governance & Management of Victoria's Forests

- Industry want the RFAs to be reviewed every 5 years with rolling extensions to provide certainty.
- Environmental groups want the RFAs to be reviewed in response to bushfires, species decline and other disturbances.
- Ensure monitoring and reporting is done and findings are dealt with transparently.
- Undertake thinning to reduce fire risk to forests and adjoining properties and improve access for firefighting.
- Increase budget to combat invasive plants and animals and consider development of pest management sector i.e. professional hunters.

- Provide more access for recreational users and clarify rules around recreational use of forests paired with increased enforcement.
- Clarify responsibility for regeneration sites and where regeneration has failed, explore different silviculture practices.
- Improve regulation of firewood collection.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE

The community opinions represented in this report are taken from the session outputs at the following events throughout June 2019. The number of attendees in the table below is based on the number of people listed on each event's sign-in sheet.

WESTERN VICTORIA				
Date	Activity	Location	Stakeholders Invited	No. of Attendees
3 June	Workshop	Daylesford	Environmental NGOs (ENGOS)	6
3 June	Drop-in session	Beaufort	General public*	20
4 June	Drop-in session	Forrest	General public*	30
4 June	One on ones	Geelong	ENGOS, local government and timber industry	4
29 June	Drop-in session	Geelong	General public*	25
CENTRAL HIGHLANDS				
11 June	Drop-in Session	Healesville	General public*	13
11 June	Workshop	Healesville	ENGOS	9
12 June	Drop-in Session	Powelltown	General public*	18
12 June	Workshop	Powelltown	Timber industry	13
13 June	Drop-in Session	Marysville	General public*	5
13 June	Workshop	Marysville	Local Govt, Water Authorities and CMAs	4
13 June	Workshop	Marysville	ENGOS	2
14 June	Drop-in Session	Alexandra	General public*	27
14 June	Workshop	Alexandra	Timber industry and local government	6

NORTH EAST				
Date	Activity	Location	Stakeholders Invited	No. of Attendees
19 June	Workshop	Benalla	ENGOS and recreation user groups	6
19 June	Workshop	Benalla	Timber industry and other commercial forest users	11
19 June	Drop-in session	Benalla	General public*	7
20 June	Drop-in session	Corryong	General public*	5
20 June	Workshop	Corryong	ENGOS and recreation user groups	5
20 June	Workshop	Corryong	Timber industry and other commercial forest users	8
GIPPSLAND / EAST GIPPSLAND				
24 June	Drop-in Session	Orbost	General public*	9
24 June	Workshop	Orbost	ENGOS	1
24 June	Workshop	Orbost	Timber Industry	11
25 June	Drop-in session	Bairnsdale	General public*	10
25 June	Workshop	Heyfield	Timber Industry	21
26 June	Workshop	Traralgon	Local Govt, Water Authorities and CMAs	13
26 June	Workshop	Traralgon	ENGOS	4
MELBOURNE				
27 June	Workshop	Melbourne	Timber groups	11
27 June	Workshop	Melbourne	ENGOS	5
27 June	Workshop	Melbourne	Recreation and other commercial forest users	14
28 June	One on ones	Melbourne	ENGOS	4
28 June	One on ones	Melbourne	Timber groups	3

* Community members, ENGOS, timber industry, recreation and commercial forest users.

APPENDIX B: MELBOURNE

Feedback collected through face-to-face engagement was transcribed by DELWP and is being published here in Appendix 2 for reference purposes. All quotes have been transcribed from handwritten notes taken at engagement events that were either directly noted by participants or written by government representatives on behalf of participants. Users should seek appropriate independent professional advice prior to relying on, or entering into any commitment based on material published here. Cloud Catcher does not guarantee, nor accept legal liability arising from or connected to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the comments.

Q1. What changes have you seen in the RFA regions?

Western Victoria RFA has virtually no industry in the native forest sector.
Greater protection of forested areas – not due to the RFA.
Gaps in Wimmera.
Move to firewood (small) industry.
Value of the industry is not proportionate to the value of the forests.
Threatened species (cockatoo) reliant on Desert String-bark.
Dundas Tablelands is one of the most cleared areas in Victoria.
JANIS doesn't deal with condition of habitat.
No export from native forest anymore.
Turnover less than \$1 million.
Significant gaps in the reserve system if the Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative rules/guidelines are applied.
JANIS principles have not been correctly applied (should be last resort). This has created a majority informal reserves, rather than formal reserves.
Wood Pulp Agreement Act.
Decline in the industry e.g. closure of mills due to non-viability of the industry (e.g. historically seven mills in Cann River, today there are none).
Decline in conservation statute on species protected by the RFAs.
Community support for timber production is plummeting.
RFAs haven't met their objectives – still conflict.
Reviews notoriously poor – first RFA not reviewed for 15 years.
Bushfires – major impact on wood supply and also on environmental and ecological values (threatened species) and infrastructure.

State laws are no substitute for Commonwealth laws. E.g. Greater Glider list and still no action statement.
Decline in forest industries.
No link between RFA and Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative reserve system with nationally agreed criteria.
Recreational uses have changed -more passive recreation including into more remote areas.
More people using forests.
Increase in population.
Increase in use of forests.
Mountain Ash of the central highlands moved on to the endangered list.
Leadbeater's possum moving onto critically endangered list.
Greater gliders becoming critically endangered.
Lack of balance in age class of trees in central highlands.
Increase in bushfires resulting in part from removal of older trees.
Clear felling practices across mixed species forest.
Drastic decline in biodiversity, degradation of forested areas, decrease in invertebrates.
Movement towards clear felling forestry.
Removal of hollow trees through firewood collection and safety.
Illegal removal of timber and illegal off-roading.
Reduction in staff working in parks.
Occurrence of failed regeneration
Changing standards resulting in more harvest.
Track closures.
Clearing of land abutting national parks.
Increase of pest species.
Lack of regeneration / failed regeneration.
Move to single species in previously mixed forest areas.
Clear felling of coupes.
Logging of rainforest / gullies.
Regeneration burns leading to drying – drying of forests due to forestry.
Business loss due to forestry activities.
Failed plantation resulting in loss of confidence.
Regrowth choking areas that have been logged.
Impact of fires.
Reduced access for rural sport and activity.
More fuels in forested areas resulting in larger fires.

Parks managed differently in parks closer to Melbourne.
Criminal activity in forests closer to Melbourne.
Protection of urban centres as the focus.
Black Saturday fires in Central Highlands affecting recreational access, especially for hazardous trees. Reduced access.
Road maintenance is done by general public.
Increase in deer numbers and wild dogs and blackberry. Decrease in control activity on blackberries or insufficient treatment. Where wildfire has come through, increase in blackberries.
Waterways drying up.
Logging in catchment affecting water supply.
Understorey species decline, leaving space for blackberries.
Wallaby numbers down due to wild dogs.
Scotch thistle and gorse increased.
Misinformation about recreational users.
More people users – mountain biking.
Traffic density in forests.
Loss of biodiversity due to logging in high conservation areas.
Loss of confidence that government is making science-based decisions.
Uncertainty has impacted workforce and desirability of certain professions.
Industry has lost expertise due to the uncertain conditions - this will take time to recover.
Importing of expertise from New Zealand.
RFA hasn't failed, it's the government that has failed to stand by them.
It is becoming more difficult to recruit the required skills.
Having an expiration date creates further uncertainty.
Forestry has done its part in terms of meeting the Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative reserve requirement.
RFAs undermined by the state government.
Area of activity reduced.
Volume decreased from 2.2m to 1.1m cubic metres - this has affected investment, resulted in uncertainty.
No net loss' clause has not been adhered to.
RFA failed to rebalance losses of area/volume - there is no trigger mechanism to balance.
Reviews have been late, undermining public confidence in the RFAs.
Decline of wood availability across all types in all regions.
50 per cent production decline in last 20 years.
Less area available due to implementation of National Parks and fires, without areas lost being replaced.
Decrease in industry employment, more so in native and in processing.
Closures of saw mills because people can't invest due to lack of certainty.
Diminished investment in drying & value-add processes by saw mills.
Demand for Victorian wood product outstrips supply.

Fewer foresters.
Challenge to social licence.
Lower enrolments in forestry education (tertiary).
Fewer courses (training).
Skills being brought in from overseas.
Native forest harvesting equipment used during fires, having been invested in by business for specialised use.
Contribution to bush fire management risk work.
Lack of understanding in metro areas about industry.
Significant improvement in safety - harvest, haulage, processing.
Aging workforce required to have higher skills.
More investment in equipment by contractors.
Improved harvesting techniques.
Lower rate of injury (LTIFR).
Less investment in green-field plantations i.e. not a lot of expansion of existing.
Regulations and changes by government has eroded the RFA.
Consideration of new investment models for plantation with regards to specific sites.
Losing skilled workers to mining, construction.
Ongoing decline in forest-dependent species
Central Highlands region - also common species have declined e.g. rosellas and kookaburras.
Fewer hollow-bearing trees further exacerbated by current rotation practices and also climate change adding stress to hollow-bearing trees.
Consequence of exemption from Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act has resulted in negative impact on ecosystem health.
Scale of logging is not sustainable.
At times RFAs have worked well and at others, hasn't worked well.
Reductions in supply have brought the industry closer to being unviable.
Significant reduction in sawlog and pulp in Victoria.
Reviews didn't result in any change.
Systemic problems with 'recovery programs'.
Mixed aged species areas need to be better protected.
Governments have failed to support RFAs, rather than the RFAs failing.
Industry frustration and debilitation and resilience.
Strong national/international demand.
Failed to provide certainty.
Policy uncertainty - businesses can't invest in staff to increase skills.
Shift toward highly skilled workforce.
Shift to electrical/mechanical engineering skills - technology, computing.
Limited private native forestry.
420,000 hectares plantation.
Community challenges around large-scale plantation.

Q2. What should the Victorian RFAs aim to achieve over the next 20 years?

Agreements need to respond to bushfires /disease outbreaks/ pests/event based.
Need to have triggers that respond to disturbances.
Triggers need to consider ecological meltdown.
Criteria of contemporary policy frameworks need to be considered.
Let the West RFA lapse – it's not necessary.
Fill the gaps RFA listed areas.
Upgrade informal reserve system.
Need a greater focus on condition rather than just representation.
Gaps need to be properly articulated.
Acknowledgment of impact of climate change on regeneration – particularly Ash forests.
Central Highlands RFA must properly review whether wood supply from these forests can support the supply.
Consider the future of industry mills.
Clear policy around size and direction of plantation estate.
Active management of plantations to produce sawlogs.
Develop clear policy/strategy for wood industry.
Any native harvesting must be for sawlogs, not pulp.
Management of forests for carbon stocks and flows.
Avoid any further extinctions.
Consistent with community expectations and climate science.
Not for 20 years, shorter duration.
Regular review. Triggers for review (e.g. bushfire, species decline). Need to review agreements, can't just continue with business as usual. For all forest values and uses not just native forest review impacts of fire on wood supply, Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative reserve system. Re-establish fundamentals in RFAs.
Stronger protection of MNES (matters of national environmental significance).
Apply JANIS criteria properly and/or review its relevance.
Enable rather than block extension of Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative reserves i.e. revisit informal reserves system.
More formal reserves systems.
Forestry needs to be assessed like every other industry.
Responsive action around protections – more adaptive than a 20-year agreement.
Ongoing assessments instead of every 20+ years.
RFAs need to be scientifically based.

Improve residual risk factor.
Acknowledge apiculture as a valuable resource.
Move to using local product locally.
Move to plantation-based industry.
Maintenance / more access for recreational users.
Ensure that agricultural users are benefiting from plantation targets and policies.
Needs to be a land use balance between urban, agroforestry and agricultural land.
Encourage nature-based tourism.
Keep people healthy and active.
Government needs to clearly state the relationship between the RFAs and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act - it is not an exemption.
Provide certainty and security for the industry - volume, quality, species mix, potential for investment in new species.
Volume numbers need to be included in RFAs to provide certainty - similar to water/mining.
Greater peer reviewing of studies to ensure that decisions of government are based on accurate science.
Making sure that research/science is done more broadly/not narrowed to certain areas.
Recognition of forestry's contribution to fire management.
Guarantees need to be longer than 5 years.
RFAs should contain minimum quantities.
Having certainty can be given in multiple layers - from State Government as well.
Assessments need to be made in adjacent lands.
Need to move to a 'whole of landscape' approach in terms of assessments.
Commitment to industry: supply, area, quality.
Security of supply.
Operational certainty.
Landscape scale management, rather than coupe level management.
Support fire management which will better reduce fire risk.
Predictability, barring large fires.
Acknowledge the fire management contribution of forestry.
Retain the exemptions from Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and Export Control Act.
Factor in the complexity of forest ecosystems and multiple uses.
Manage forest health and biodiversity as a primary purpose/main priority.
Balance and account for wider range of uses as secondary.
Recognise the full suite of value e.g. carbon sequestration, pollination, water, recreation, tourism.
Balance all forest values and users equally, to influence logging regime.
Continue to improve forestry management practices that have been improving over the years.
Certainty so that industry can invest.
Commitment over a longer period of time, by all involved, to have a clearer view of the future.
Continued support/investment in firefighting capacity, currently provided by timber industry.
Encourage parties to compromise in order to meet triple-bottom line intent.

Early communication on supply forecasts.
Provide certainty to industry.
Commitment by parties that are signatory to RFAs especially State Government who make decisions around reserves and supply.
Decisions to be made on wider data set i.e. recovery plans for threatened species should factor in whole of landscape approach, not just multiuse.
Encourage investment in research and development with greater focus placed on bushfires.
Improve access for firefighting and reduce fuel load - plan and manage bushfire risk.
Further consideration of threats e.g. feral cats and fire, to threatened species.
Collect better data to support fire management.
Encourage investment in climate change as per other states.
Carbon/lost carbon needs to be properly valued against logging.
Need to properly account for carbon emissions resulting from logging.
The state needs to sell carbon rights from state forests.
Losses to other industries due to logging need to be reflected by elevating value of carbon.
Expansion of reserve system to properly protect endangered species.
Protect the remaining 1939 Ash Forests Leadbeater's.
Detection-based prescription in place to protect Greater Glider and other species that are impacted negatively by logging.
Ensuring these species are correctly listed by March 2020.
Shorter term - 5 yearly reviews aren't adequate.
Shouldn't be left to VicForests to determine old growth forests.
Old growth forest should be defined by JANIS framework - independently determined by scientists.
Uneven aged forests need to be protected as old growth forests.
Government support for RFA.
Security for industry to allow for investment.
Adaptive planning - 'whole of landscape' approach - fire events allow other areas to open up.
Recognition of skill losses if industry closes down - knowledge losses.
Proactivity around retention of knowledge/skill.
Target of 500,000 hectares of plantation.
More fibre - either native or plantation.
Mapping/analysis of private native forestry.
Greater clarity around regulatory requirements of plantations from Government.
Plantations don't need an RFA - conflating them into the RFA creates problems.
Greater education around how RFAs work.
Like for like exchange of areas removed/reserved - movement of areas out of production always goes in one direction.
No net loss' principle not adhered to.

Q3. What are the potential improvements you think should be made?

Indigenous joint management opportunities outside of Parks estates – State Forests.
No clear-fell logging.
Apply Traditional Owners knowledge and wisdom, apply cultural practices.
Carbon methods for forests.
RFA managed for highest and best use and values.
Remove supply commitments.
Active management of weeds and pests, tourism (infrastructure), restoration of forests to improve forest health and condition.
Genuine partnership with Traditional Owners, engagement with other communities (not just Registered Aboriginal Parties). Meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners in decisions that affect Country. e.g. Don't let RFAs undermine future opportunities for Traditional Owners negotiated through Treaty.
Recommendations of reviews need to be implemented. E.g. discontinuation of West RFA.
Action statements / recovery plan being prepared more timely following listing.
Transition from native forest and into plantations. Easier for pulp, harder in sawlog. For environmental and industry outcomes, support transition in jobs.
Greater ongoing funding for threatened species, monitoring and research, recovery plans being implemented.
RFAs deliver stronger environmental protections.
Factor in difference between different Ecological Vegetation Class (EVCs) and forest age for representative component of Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative.
Cancel western region RFA as there is small turnover and cottage industry.
Reviewing the Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative reserve system in Far West Victoria.
Don't renew where there isn't significant timber industry.
Funding for private land conservation.
Deliver formal reserves i.e. Convert informal reserves.
Prevent clear felling.
Consideration of water catchments due to new trees needing more water.
Remove exemption from Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.
Assessments need to be up to date and agreements more adaptive.
Increased budget to maintain tracks and camping area.
Increased enforcement of illegal activity.
Maintained resulting in increased use by recreational groups.
Open up areas where logging may happen to recreation. Keep access open on recreation roads and to wider areas.
Better communication about why the RFAs exist.
Have agreements ongoing so as to not result in uncertainty.
Industry needs certainty around volumes to give flow on confidence to other industries e.g. paper industry.
Community needs to be aware of supply agreements (banking) in order to borrow/invest/sell businesses.
Clearly state enforceable provisions.
There needs to be a better review process to responded to and offset losses.
Stakeholders need a say in when reviews take place.
Better balance between social/economic/environmental (triple bottom line).
Firm turnaround of 5-year reviews.

State Government needs to clearly communicate the relationship between the RFA and Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.
Commit to (either way) to a sustainable industry so people can invest with certainty including.
Strong policy framework to support industry.
Comprehensive state-wide assessments pairing current DELWP studies with forest studies.
Longer lead times on pre-harvest survey.
Adaptative management to maintain forest industry indicators.
Strategic Assessments instead of RFAs because they consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cumulative impacts - impact of climate change - complexity of forest ecosystems - all of the interests/uses of forests.
Somewhere between landscape and coupe level approvals.
Don't repeat 'blanket' approvals of Strategic Assessments.
Update Victorian regulatory regime.
New name: RFA has a lot of baggage.
Remove blanket exemption from Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.
Account for all uses.
Adaptive management i.e. revisit rate of logging and volume which factors in catastrophic events such as major bushfires.
Adaptive management responsive to threatened species and changes in the environment.
Strategic Assessments (under Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act Act)/bio-region assessments could form the basis of renewed forest agreements.
Education around native forestry, addressing difference between urban and regional areas.
Actually, uphold the triple-bottom-line intent.
Review/revisit triple-bottom-line intent to determine whether economic values are actually being delivered.
Learn from other countries on native forest education.
Consider the broader sets of threat to species loss, beyond logging.
5-year reviews, rolling extensions.
Revisit membership of scientific advisory panel.
Define/implement a framework to guide in application of triple-bottom-line so that economic, social and environmental values are equally valued and done so in a transparent way and underpinned by peer-review science.
Events which reduce supply, can trigger a review e.g. fire, available volume, protection zones, disease outbreak.
Transparent and open process to determine sustainable yield, supported by regular reviews.
Commit to no net loss in volume.
Flexibility to ensure there isn't reduction in supply over the term of RFAs, including major disturbances such as fire.
5 year rolling extension process, providing 15-20-year horizon of certainty i.e. more long-term view.
Better balance between triple-bottom-line i.e. equally factor in economic and social as much as environmental values, currently environment has greater emphasis.
Take a whole of landscape and whole of ecosystem approach to managing biodiversity across the state, as per policy rather than species-based prescriptions.
Extend effort to find threatened species in reserves and areas outside timber production forest.
More proportionate monitoring to understand the extent of species population in an open area rather than from individual colonies in coupes.
Science Advisory Committee to be involved in recovery reporting.

Arthur Rylah Institute to be involved if not the Science Advisory Committee.
Needs to be a requirement within the RFA for a quota-based habitat across landscape as well as detection-based prescription, content of these should set by scientists.
Needs to be a ban on logging of old growth forests.
Create carbon reserves to meet state/federal emissions reduction targets.
Triggers for up listings/new listing resulting increasing areas of habitat.
6-12-month turnaround for recovery program reporting.
Resolve failures of recovery programs.
For species within the RFA there needs to be a recovery plan in place with fixed terms.
Action statements need to have more time specificity.
Assessments are not 20+ years old.
Triggers for Change', not 'Triggers for Review'.
Fixed periods charges as well as triggers.
1- major bushfires lead to reductions in volume 2- uplifting of any species 3- new listings of species/ecosystems
Clarity from government - not undermining.
Communication to community about the framework.
Government pride.
Better research about opportunities, new products.
Demand will continue to grow - commitment around where that will come from, whether it's imported or grown domestically.
Adaptive planning.
Update state forest resource inventory.
Greater monitoring.
Support for domestic processing - to give certainty to the industry.
Large scale thinning to protect forests and those that adjoin.
7.9 million hectares of forest.
Minimise impact of large-scale events - salvage logging.
Educate community regarding plantations being included.
Plantation should augment rather than replace native timber.
Certification of private native forestry.

Q4: How do you use forests in your region?

Access for sport to access the forest has economic benefits in health and directly into economy (supported by UK study).
Support regional – small communities and local businesses – access for multiple users e.g. fuel, food from local 'gateway' towns.
Public forests (7.1m ha) managed for recreation, construction, apiary. These are not incompatible with timber harvesting.
HVP plantations: Bikes, mountain biking, school kids, hiking.
Rail trails.

Firewood collection - as long as legal, it's fine.

Public perception - native forest is assumed to be virgin forests, that we are cutting down old growth.

Q5. How could the RFAs better provide for multiple forest uses (i.e. recreation, conservation, livelihood & economy)?

Water as a resource needs to be considered in forest planning.

Forests need right pollinators – apiary should be reduced they take pollen away from forest that's needed by other pollinators.

Understand all the uses of state parks.

Disperse tourism through development of more diverse activities.

Better capture consideration of pest plants and animals – Deer have a negative effect on regeneration and ecosystems.

Greater consideration of climate change – identification of refuge, triggers for review = bushfires rapid ecological change. Review sustainable yield, Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative system.

Ensuring old growth forest is protected.

Supporting access.

Full consideration of social and economic factors.

Water harvesting and water quality.

Ensuring public amenities are protected and not lost due to timber harvesting.

Looking to the future and how we consider changing environment.

Consideration of biosecurity.

Increased funding for complementary outcomes across preventative health through DHHS and Parks Vic and DELWP.

Coordinated planning in tourism.

Healthy parks, healthy people – consider the broader social and community well being.

Decrease clear felling forestry, increase carbon story and access for recreational users.

Health of forests = increase users which is beneficial for the adjoining communities.

Review access for recreational users and nature-based tourism – so appropriate access is provided in a changing environment (e.g. seasonal closures) and as areas recover from disturbances or major weather events.

End logging in high conversation areas.

Public engagement - ensure people know what's happening and what will happen in the future
- learning from other industries
- VR tools for education

Education
-telling the story around all of the uses

Government have the right policy settings in place.

Role for industry and VicForests too.

In schools as well as public education.

RFAs should align with the government's 2031 policy.

Emphasise a need for a whole of landscape level.

Strike a balance between triple bottom line include in regard to Leadbeater's possum (LB) buffers.

Environmental weighted against socio-economic values - e.g. review of Leadbeater's possum was to happen at zoo colonies, but happened when 500-600 colonies were found.

Q6. What are your views on existing environmental protections afforded across the entire forest estate (including parks, reserves & State forests) through the RFAs?

Need to ensure environment retained for future generations.
Water for communities and agriculture reduced from forest practices and drying of forests.
Needs to be based on science i.e. leaf litter survey.
Need to have proper monitoring.
Onus on industry to prove that they are operating correctly and that their operations are safe.
Myrtle rust could be a devastating issue – climate change could trigger explosion.
Sterile forests, species decline, severe degradation.
Firewood, illegal collection an issue and cutting down live trees.
Mountain Ash - community listing and Leadbeater's possum listing, demonstrate issues, glider decline is a marker of decline of old growth more generally.
Lack of balance in age class structure and natural uneven age – causes increase in severity of bushfires; indicative of decline in system more generally.
Vic forestry more intensive clear felling unnecessary.
Data on biodiversity and forestry seems to double count (net gain policy and RFA outcomes). Victorian policy claims there is a net gain in state forest, even though there is a change in condition due to forestry.
RFAs have not resulted in significant contribution to management of formal reserve system or private land conservation.
There needs to be an increased budget to support monitoring, weeds, pests (deer) partnership with DELWP, Parks Vic, community and research.
National parks = decrease access for some users and increase for nature-based tourism.
Mountain Ash holds the greatest storage (as well as rainforest) and therefore should be protected.
Criticisms around animal by animal ad hoc approach - landscape scale is more appropriate.
Visibility of science - ensure science is a robust at a landscape scale - not cherry picking 'science'.
Question - if the science is widely debated, should: put a hold on industry while science is being settled or work with industry to continue while the science is being settled.

Q7. How could the environmental protections be improved?

Recovery plan / conservation advice must be implemented – prescription must be detection based.
Expanded conservation reserves at landscape level with focus on listed species, focus on mixed age stands and science based only.
Expand informal to protect threatened species; uneven age; old growth.
Review all threatened species prescriptions - base on and strengthen up to date information.
Recovery plan for all species in 12 months – include landscape habitat, plus species prescriptions (survey sight based).
Better enforcement and resourcing for compliance.
Where regeneration fails, different silviculture practices required.
Large enough areas retained to enable 'regeneration'.
Intensive logging practices drying out ecosystems – losing species (such as tree ferns and associated biota) and contributes to more intensive fires.
Failed regeneration – responsibility for management unclear.
Plug the gaps in reserves systems.

Publish Ramsar and World Heritage sites clearly and explain these.
Achieve net gain in biodiversity in Victoria.
Improve prescriptions for threatened species in the west – resolve reservation in West. Identify and protect better portions of state forest, need more defined areas for minor forest produce and recreational use.
Consider pest plants and animals (although no point including this if it does not translate into better management).
Consideration of the entire ecosystem.
Consideration of spacing of coupes.
More transparency in the VicForests data and accessibility to the community.
Increase accountability of 5 yearly reviews, ensure that they occur every 5 years.
Adequate surveys to be done across the landscape - protections based on robust scientific data.
Better burnings, RFAs could provide for controlled, scheduled to avoid catastrophic fires based on robust sciences – burning in the right areas at the right time.
Whole of landscape approach is very important for biodiversity - needs more strategic alignment.
Management prescriptions to take account of threatened species at a landscape level - e.g. Leadbeater's buffer, the science surveys were skewed to harvestable areas - a peer review process of science is needed
RFAs should take a whole of ecosystem approach - and consider all risks e.g. bushfire risk.
How can environment protections be used in an integrated landscape.

Q8. What opportunities could the RFAs provide to support access to and traditional use of forests by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people?

Small scale burning could be done by/in partnership with Traditional Owners. RFA could recognise exiting federation.
Sustainable action plan already exists for game hunters which consults Traditional Owners (by rec users, rather than government).
Access to workforce, keen on opportunities.
Cultural burning possibilities to contributing to management of bushfires.

Q9. How could the RFAs enable the legal rights of Traditional Owners to partner in land management & seek economic and cultural opportunities to be realised in future forest management?

Greater involved with Traditional Owners in land management.
Incorporate firestick practices and other aboriginal cultural practices relating to controlled burning.
Increase funding of Traditional Owner representative groups to increase promote engagement.

Q10. How could the RFAs consider climate change & other large-scale natural disturbances (including bushfires)?

Acknowledge and mention climate change.
Adopt climate specific criteria e.g. climate refuges in reserves.
Provisions to handle large-scale distributions so that sustainable yield is revisited i.e. trigger for reassessment.
After major fire, stop and reassess yields and habitats.
Factor in how climate change affects regeneration and the way in which logging equates to clearing, because certain species are close to thresholds and are unlikely to regenerate where they currently occur.
Broaden reserves to allow for climate change / changes of species distribution.
Salvage logging after bushfires.
Myrtle rust needs to be addressed in the face of climate change.
Need to factor in the future risk of fires.
Bushfires, changing rainfall etc...need to consider farming, neighbourhoods and land use around the forests.
This may change the viability of certain species (trees).
Can hinder recovery of threatened species following bushfire – need to consider and possibly collect new research.
Changing climate impacts traditional methods as well.
Consider the carbon dense areas in Victoria and the value they hold in terms of carbon sequestration.
Water catchment contributions of older trees.
Less rainfall and younger forests taking up water.
Factor in the differences in different forests for management.
Consider how changed conditions affect regeneration in coupes, silver wattle vs eucalypt.
Consider the broader contributions forest areas make to communities e.g. mountain ash.
Fire management to reduce severity of bushfires.
Opportunities in protection forest and reserve system for large scale thinning which would significantly reduce fire risk.
To address climate change, the use of forest and wood products must increase significantly (promote wood as a sustainable resource).
Consideration of climate change should be included in the Vic RFAs.
Cultural burns - expand current program.

Q11. How could the RFAs better address industry sustainability?

Transition to plantation timber.
Transition to alternative fibres for pulp (move to hemp).
Government subsidise transport of plantation timber to until plantation timbers/alternative fibres come online in east.
Stop logging for pulp.
Wood quotas shouldn't be fixed, they need to be responsive.
Acknowledgement of the future mechanisation of timber industry.
Maintaining access.
Protecting old growth forest - but not putting in National Parks to ensure that motorbikes have access.
Beekeepers - continued access (in National Parks if possible). Making decisions about when harvesting – consider bees.

Plantation expansion and other land mass need to consider impacts on other land uses.
Forest management system - recognition of regulations in Aust/Vic compared to overseas. Need to be cognisant of the impacts of less regulated forestry in Indonesia etc.
Invest in plantations.
Take a longer-term view for quality wood, not for pulp.
Implementing checks and balances to ensure ongoing sustainability of industry, environment and social factors - reviews that reflect new science.
Certainty and security.
Trust in process, builds social licence.
Ensure monitoring and reporting done and findings dealt with transparently.
Explain carbon outcomes - sorted in wood, avoided emissions should be taken into account e.g. using wood instead of concrete.
Firewood - if too hard to get legally will go illegally - this may have an impact.
Adaptive management for industry outcomes as well as conservation outcomes.

Q12. How could the RFA's encourage investment and new market opportunities for forest-based industries (including the forests and wood products industry, tourism, apiary & emerging markets such as carbon)?

Consideration of water as an import resource.
Consent from Traditional Owners, not just consultation.
Develop a hemp industry.
State selling carbon from public estates and protecting carbon reserves. Using this as an income stream, selling carbon must come from protecting forests.
Look at value adding timber domestically rather than sending it offshore.
Clarification around exemption from Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act for new plantations in RFA areas since Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act introduced.
Value carbon storage potential of forest which relies on an agreed method of accounting – apply known methods.
Create market for carbon.
Development of pest management sector i.e. professional hunters to work in areas where there are too many deer.
Value adding e.g. investment of \$4m attracts three times the investment. E.g. Tasmania walking tracked invested \$11m and attracted \$32m. Employment opportunities.
Tourism growth (and tourism operator jobs) can build an existing tourism - leads to accommodation. Consider marketing and social media, planning of infrastructure.
Greater clarity around the recreation uses/rules.
Expansion of 'More to Explore' to include various uses.
Less interruption to policies affecting forestry investment.
Recreation users bring a lot of spend into smaller, regional towns (including fuel, food, accommodation keeping gateway towns open to recreations users).
Protect biodiversity to increase the value of nature-based tourism.
Revisit limitations placed on recreation users and nature-based tourism.
Acknowledge there's a lot of already happening and support things already underway rather than limiting recreation users/burdening with regulation.
There is a large proportion of forests in Vic that are available for harvest but currently considered to be uneconomic. There is better opportunity to understand and use this resource. State-wide Forest Resource Inventory is out of date and could be brought up to date to help with increased understanding.

Investment in training.
Recording/measure recreational use in state forests.
Virtual reality – tourism.
Investment in new wood products e.g. biomass engineered and composite products.
Low carbon fuels and biofuels.
Expanding markets.
Mix wood pellets and brown coal bark + leaf waste - energy.
Research on capacity to use residues from harvest or from forest - forest sweeping.
Pair biodiversity management approach with forest rehabilitation.

Q13. How can the RFAs support the adaptive management of Victoria’s forests in response to emerging issues (e.g. major bushfires) and opportunities (e.g. emerging industries)?

Improved forest age structures (far too much young, regrowth forests). Increased old growth in the system, and management/protection of mature stands to recruit to old growth.
More multi-aged forests, there is a moved to single-age class forests. Cease clear fell logging – selection logging better.
Regenerate areas of failed regeneration, including understorey.
Reduced logging – which has a drying effect on forests. Protection of tree ferns from intensively managed forests. Logging > regen burn > thinning = loss of tree ferns which are a keystone species.
More land management staff in forests (compliance and enforcement officers). There is no one around anymore policing. Increased presences.
Greater management of deer.
If new species are listed, got to make a recovery plan and action statement (that meet requirements) of Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Within 12 months, must include prescriptions that are meaningful. Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative Reserve system and in-field prescriptions.
Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative system designed will consideration of climate change, bushfires and providing for refuges and connectivity.
Do not include wood supply volumes into RFA – better management for biosecurity risks (e.g. Phytophthora), shouldn’t be fixed because removes ability to adapt.
After bushfires, reduce wood supply volumes. No salvage logging.
Increased budget for Parks Victoria to manage parks and pest species.
Consider water harvesting and quality.
Consider the thirstiness of plantations in relation to catchment areas.
Ensure that areas that 'locked' up are managed sufficiently.
Use of fire-stick methods (traditional burning).
Resourcing of traditional burning trials - focus on term trials.
Bigger budget for land management to combat pest species in parks. Increase budget for Parks Victoria (0.35 budget for 30% land mass). Moving money from DHHS and DSE to DELWP and Parks Victoria.
Better capture carbon value and consider as part of planning. Carbon capture as an emerging market, recognise the value in south eastern vic.
Opportunity to recognise dollar value of activities such as recreation and benefits to society.
Plan for boutique timber industry with longer term view on quality timber.

Relationship between recreation users and healthy forests.
Level of planned burning is not enough; too risk adverse, are there legislative barriers, how do we reintroduce cultural burning practices?
Recognition of traditional owner rights should be reflected in forest management planning.
Address the lack of trust in scientific studies.
Government honours commitments.

Q14. What areas of research would better equip us to sustainably manage Victoria's forests?

Greater investment in research to have a scientific evidence base to inform forest management decisions.
More investment in research (leaf litter surveys, fungi surveys).
Opportunities for value-adding in the wood products industry – local, stop shipping woodchips offshore.
Proper biodiversity research – making sure the forest is healthy, invertebrates – the real ecosystems, change that happen pre and post fire / pre and post logging, impact on birds, invertebrates etc.
Education about biodiversity and its importance, particularly to foresters.
More finer scale climate modelling, across the state.
Other uses – better data on state forest uses e.g. how Parks Vic have a way of measuring visitors.
Greater research into food security in relation to climate change.
Adaptability of forest areas to climate change (i.e. effects on mountain ash).
Whole of landscape' approach to land management.
Recognition of local knowledge.
On the ground' monitoring rather than assumed prior knowledge at time of recovery/resilience of species.
Replacement products for timber (recycled plastics).
Research into salvaged / burnt timber (pine plantations).
Matching projections with results.
Retraining if job losses are incurred.
Alternative sources for pulp to meet legislated supply.
Fire management - better research and focussed on forest conservation purposes and what areas are and aren't burned.
Deer populations - size, density, range.
What is the proof to support management actions e.g. creation of National Parks and to justify specific exclusions (e.g. banning of horses). Where is the science to support those decisions?
Whole of landscape approach to scientific studies.
Needs to be better resourcing around species survey to ensure that is science-based, not just finding the result the community wants.
Government-led, scientist reviewed studies need to happen.
Without 'rigour' to the process, the industry won't agree/have confidence in the results.
Community confidence is connected to the rigour of the process.
Whole of ecosystem approach to flora and fauna.
Focus on bushfire mitigation to protect species - fire breaks, roads.
Look into 'calling' possums out of harvesting areas.
Look into forest-based resources not currently being utilised (i.e. peppermint).
Whole of landscape approach means reassessing the line between reserves and areas for harvesting.

Data collection on visitation/recreational use of state forests (and Plantations?) as well as national parks e.g. Old Beachy Rail Trail/HVP - mountain biking/community use.
Engaging with communities around forest management and industries-innovative/using virtual reality.
Need a much stronger research and evidence-base - threatened species, habitats and how they behaviour - > to inform adaptive management i.e. is the Leadbeater's Possum better protect as a result of exclusion zone.
Better investment/expansion in survey program for threatened species and timber resource assessments.
New research/investment in value adding wood and wood-derived products -bio energy fuel from smaller diameter logs e.g. from plantations/thinned forests.
Research into use of harvesting/processing wood residue for biomass/fuels. Timber as energy.

Q15. How could the RFA monitoring, review (including the five-yearly reviews) & reporting arrangements be improved?

More investment in monitoring of biodiversity.
Greater monitoring - industry should demonstrate their activity is sustainable. Onus on industry.
Can't access a Victorian system today and evaluate appropriateness Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act exemption. Need a real-time assessment, can't rely on assessment that were made 25 years ago.
Agreement shouldn't be for 20 years, particularly given climate change. Maybe 5 years.
Five yearly reviews – should have consequential effects (new prescriptions, additions to Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative, cease and desist timber harvesting, effectiveness of prescriptions are they working or not).
Triggers for review – significant change, new listing/up listing / major bushfire.
Compliance audits.
Ensure change in condition is reflected in net gain.
Victoria double counts gains in public land - once in RFA logic and again in net gain accounting.
Improve species survey, prior to logging using scientific methods.
Ongoing monitoring and measurement of areas rather than monitoring before harvest.
Consider the landscape in how you designate protected areas, rather than just a 200m buffer zone.
Ongoing research, rather one-off studies.
Importance of five-year reviews; need to be done on time and properly and communicate outcomes.
Review whether environmental protections are actually effective in protecting threatened species.
Do the five yearly reviews of the RFAs on time.
Sustainability indicators - if in decline, what happens next. Implementation of recommended actions.
How the RFAs are performing in providing stability for forest-based industries.
Use adaptive management principles for industry development as well environmental values. University of Melbourne has suggested improvements to the way wood supply is calculated (probabilistic model).

Other Comments/Concerns

Prescriptions in RFA are eastern Victoria focussed.
These aren't ecologically relevant any more.
Before RFAs were introduced, 84% of reserve system was already in place.
Reserves happened in spite of RFAs.
Reserves created due to community pressure.
Amendment or repeal of Wood Pulp Agreement Act.

Forest Industry Taskforce: Industry edge – viability of plantations; Recreational use; threatened species expert advice (13 in all); Jobs, skills and training in the industry; allow Treaty processes to play out.
No need to review – should be discontinued.
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act exemption shouldn't continue.
Commonwealth laws – Vic laws can replace commonwealth laws.
More knowledge to communities so they can engage with government processes such as RFA engagement.
Frustrating that boundaries will not be revisited.
There should be no RFAs.
Hand gliders not given a licence since 2009.
More extensive requirements for permits.
Revisit pulp wood agreement - divert exports of wood chip to local processors.
Thanks for Vic Government for doing engagement on RFAs.
Discrepancy between the science on species and the lack of research.
Environment groups seek to undermine RFA process because they don't want them.
Why do ENGOs think the RFAs have failed when volumes of timber have halted.
Does Victoria have a Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative reserve system?
Significant disconnect between finished product and resource/harvesting techniques.
Forest industry taskforce.
Timber release plan and rolling operations plans.
There has been a sincere attempt by Vic Government to engage on RFAs and update science.
Stronger leadership and action on logging by Vic Government.
Latrobe Valley's largest employer with large flow on to local economies.
26% state forest, plantation.
VicForests manage balance of sawlog verses pulp volume.
Legislation contributes to a competitive market which further encourages investment across the timber industry.
Pulp and paper - demise can occur quickly.
Native timber woodchips that are a by-product of sawmilling and are cheaper than plantation woodchips.
Recurring misconception of the value of the industry, it isn't just VicForests at the stump.
Recognise higher value products and flow on economic benefits = job creation \$573m per annum.
Action statements (at a state level) have not been timely or transparent.
Science Advisory Committee well regarded within scientific community.
Don't think there should be an RFA.
A new Ballarat every year - 122,000 added to Victoria's population.

