

The Regional Forest Agreement with Victoria should be abandoned

The RFA has failed to protect species threatened with extinction, including the Leadbeater's possum and the greater glider. As demonstrated in evidence in the Federal Court trial of *Friends of Leadbeaters Possum v. VicForests*, the Leadbeater's possum has continued to decline in number during the period of the RFA, principally due to the effects of logging and bushfire. Further, no measures have been undertaken to protect the greater glider even when VF is provided with formal survey findings demonstrating their presence in areas marked for clearfell despite the Scientific Advisory Committee finding that logging is a major threat to the creature's survival. The case also demonstrated VF currently has not developed silviculture methods which conform with the precautionary principle.

Bushfire is predicted to increase with climate change, thereby threatening further the habitat of threatened and endangered species; and logging represents an added pressure on habitats.

The value of our native forests in the Central Highlands is much greater as a water resource than as a timber resource. This is because we now understand the importance of that forest on both the quantity and quality of Melbourne's water.

The forest has more economic value as a tourist attraction and for recreational purposes than as a source of revenue from timber. This was especially brought to light for the people of Noojee when VF's own social impact assessment recommended against logging next to the town due to the likely damage to the local tourist industry and employment; but VF decided to go ahead with the logging anyway, but was prevented from doing so by an injunction. The overall tourist and recreational value of the Central Highlands as a whole far outweighs the economic value of the timber industry.

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