

Murrindindi Branch ALP Submission to Future of our Forests
Regional Forest Agreement Community Drop In Session
Alexandra 14/6/2019

We believe that;

- Logging of Mountain and Alpine Ash should cease immediately and the trees be protected with a heritage overlay.
- Logging of all other native timber in the central highlands be halved for the next 10 years with the view to further reductions into the future.
- A new authority be establishing to regulate all Victorian logging.

Background

If logging is allowed to continue at its current rate our government and logging companies will be responsible for the extinction of Ash forests in the Central Highland. It is negligent of VicForests, State and Federal Governments to place such little value on such a unique precious resource.

Scientists have estimated that there is less than 6 years of sustainable logging of Ash forests in the Central Highlands. How do Victorians value these forests and what is the price of extinction?

A dollar value can be placed on the value of the 20% of logged Ash that is milled for furniture and construction. Whole trunks are cut whole, placed in containers and exported overseas, the rest is milled in Victoria. A price can be placed on 80% of the Ash that is chipped and exported to a Japanese paper company. We believe that whatever this dollar value is, it will never compensate us for the extinction of our Ash forests

Victoria's Mountain and Alpine ash trees are as unique as American Redwoods. Ash trees are the tallest flowering plants in the world, they are almost as tall as the redwoods which are conifers rather than flowering plants. Redwoods almost were logged to extinction. They were protected in 1920 by the creation of 4 national and state parks. Less than 10% of old growth redwood forests remained when the parks were established.

The ecosystem of the American redwood parks preserves a number of threatened animal species such as the tidewater goby, Chinook salmon, northern spotted owl, and Steller's sea lion. The soils and watershed have been stabilised in the redwood park areas.

100 years later in the Central Highlands Ash forests, Australian Scientists have signalled the extinction of the Leadbeaters possum and other endangered species and have outlined the effect on water and soil in catchment areas by current logging practises. These inconvenient truths need to be confronted before it is too late.

We believe most Victorians don't understand the facts. If the facts were understood then Victorians would value the natural resources of their own

country no less than the Californians who fought to protect their unique environment.

With less than 6 years of sustainable logging in the Central Highlands it is time to do something. Do we allow logging ash to continue or do we preserve something of our unique environment for future generations? Do we value our Ash forests and regard them as the equal the redwood forests or sell them to commercial interests? What is our legacy?

VicForests claimed a profit of \$1.5M last year. We believe a new regulatory agency should be established and it should not have to make a profit. It should regulate the industry more thoroughly.

We do not believe and the cost to local communities and Victoria is included in the cost of logging. These should be and should be added to the cost of logging our forests.

Jobs have been lost despite the oversight of this agency.

- In Murrindindi Shire, Goulds (ATP) and Murrindindi Timber Mills closed with the loss of more than 100 mill jobs.
- The timber and associated jobs have been sent out of the district to other mills in Gippsland and elsewhere.
- Jobs have been exported overseas. Whole logs are cut up and exported overseas or as wood chip to Japan.

Road maintenance is a huge burden for small shires like Murrindindi.

- In the past the cost to road maintenance used to be partial born by a special "Timber Towns' Grant to fund road repair. Now there is no special grant so the cost burden falls on a small ratepayer base who are paying a higher proportion of rates to benefit the timber industry.

Contributing to climate change.

- Removal of trees is reducing carbon capture.
- Water is lost to the rivers due to the change in hydrology and destabilization of soils in watersheds.
- Ecosystems are being destroyed

Regulation is inept.

- When it was supposed to be protected, the visual amenity of ridge lines has been destroyed by logging coups.
- Clear felling has been reported in multiple coups.
- Logging trucks regularly travel outside curfew hours.

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Murrindindi Branch ALP

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