

Re – Modernisation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements

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In writing this submission I would like to express my great concern at the loss of our native forests and the urgent need for drastic changes to the logging industry to ensure the short and long term protection of all our forests and the life they sustain.

I have read innumerable documents from a diverse range of views, and I keep returning to the same conclusion: we cannot afford to continue logging as it is harming our long term economic stability, contributing to climate change, adding significant pressure on our already stressed biodiversity, and leading to great distress among the community where mental health issues are on the rise with distinct links made to the ongoing loss of our natural environment. The Australian Psychological Society describes this in detail and connects the issue to climate change.

Our forests are essential – their protection increases our resilience in multiple ways.

We still do not fully understand just how valuable they are not only for humans, but for the Earth as a whole. 'Forests are under tremendous pressure from global change. Interdisciplinary science that integrates knowledge of the many interacting climate services of forests with the impacts of global change is necessary to identify and understand as yet unexplored feedbacks in the Earth system and the potential of forests to mitigate climate change.' ¹

As stated on the website of World Resources Institute, '...stopping deforestation, restoring forests and improving forestry practices could cost-effectively remove 7 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide annually, or as much as eliminating 1.5 billion cars—more than all of the cars in the world today!

In fact, forests are key to at least six of the study's 20 "natural climate solutions," which could collectively reduce 11.3 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year. That's as much as halting global oil consumption and would get us one-third of the way toward limiting global warming to 2 degrees C (3.6 degrees F) above pre-industrial levels — the threshold for avoiding catastrophic effects of climate change — by 2030.' ²

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that 'limiting global warming to 1.5C is not only achievable but also critical, given the previously underestimated accelerating risks for every degree of warming beyond that target.

It has also suggested that the amount of carbon dioxide removal (CDR) that will be needed can be limited by significant and rapid cuts in emissions, but also reduced energy and land demand to a few hundred gigatonnes without relying on Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS).

¹ <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/320/5882/1444>

² <https://www.wri.org/blog/2017/11/conserving-forests-could-cut-carbon-emissions-much-getting-rid-every-car-earth>

This means forests and land use can and must play a key role in efforts to achieve 1.5 degrees, but governments and industry too often overlook why improved forest protection, as well as forest restoration, are crucial alternative solutions to risky CDR technologies such as BECCS.’³

Countless other organisations – including the UN, World Health Organisation, Australian Army, Doctors for the Environment, the World Bank and the Investor Group on Climate Change [which represents institutional investors with total funds under management of over \$2 trillion and cover over 7.5 million people in Australia and New Zealand] hold strong positions on the need for action to protect our environment as one crucial way to mitigate climate change and decrease ongoing pollution, have a lesser impact on biodiversity and significantly reduce the number of species forced to extinction as a direct result of human impact.

Australia has a shocking record for extinctions and this will only continue along the same trajectory if we do not dramatically change our attitudes, our aspirations, and our actions. We must shift to smarter ways of working – jobs must evolve and those whose livelihoods will be impacted upon by halting logging in our native forests must be supported to transition to viable alternatives. There are many organisations that specialise in such transitions and they should be consulted. The opportunities are there – we must choose to make change.

Innumerable studies demonstrate the links between healthy forests and economic prosperity, healthy forests and greater human health, healthy forests and greater social connectivity, healthy forests and greater sense of belonging for community, healthy forests and cleaner air, healthy forests and reduced pollution, healthy forests and a more stable climate, healthy forests and greater average rainfall, healthy forests and sequestration of carbon, healthy forests and the potential to contribute over one third of climate change mitigation actions that are scientifically estimated to be needed, and so much more.

We have a responsibility to ourselves, our families, to people across the globe, and to all the creatures whose lives depend on the presence of our healthy forests. Finding the right kind of agreement to continue logging is not the answer – we need an agreement that transitions our community to a healthier future. Our forests are dwindling. We have already cleared the majority of all land. Please cease all logging and establish smarter ways of working, support those in the industry who need to transition, and develop greater consideration for how we use our resources ensuring we prevent further harm.

³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/forests-technology-stop-climate-change-181105081303837.html>