

## **Western Forests and Woodlands at risk**

The five Victorian RFAs must be allowed to expire, and not be extended or rolled over. Right now, there is a woefully overdue, legally mandated, five-yearly review of Victoria's five RFAs underway.

The looming expiration of the RFAs provides a once-in-two-decades opportunity to put in place improved, modern and transparent arrangements for management of Victoria's publicly owned native state forests – based on current science, and on community views about how our state forests should be valued, used and managed.

Native forest logging is strongly contested, based on conflicting and out of date information and concepts. In many ways, an appropriately constituted judicial and expert review would be a fairer process, if a review is undertaken at all.

There are five RFAs in Victoria, which start expiring from March 2018:

- East Gippsland (signed 3 February 1997)
- Central Highlands (signed 27 March 1998)
- North East (signed 9 August 1999)
- West Victoria – west of the Hume Highway to the South Australian border (signed 31 March 2000)
- Gippsland (signed 31 March 2000)

This overdue five-yearly review should recommend the RFAs be abandoned, and at a minimum end the special treatment this industry enjoys under the RFAs by:

- end the regulatory relic which is the Western Regional Forest Agreement and comprehensively review proposed logging plans;
- discontinuing the industry's exemption from national environment laws in all RFAs;
- accounting for other forest-dependent industries—such as conservation recreation, tourism, agriculture, water, and carbon – in any arrangement or agreements going forward;
- Strengthen management prescriptions for threatened species, climate change impacts, and fire;
- Make substantial additions to the formal reserve system.

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