



REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT JOINT ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY REPORT: EAST GIPPSLAND REGION

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

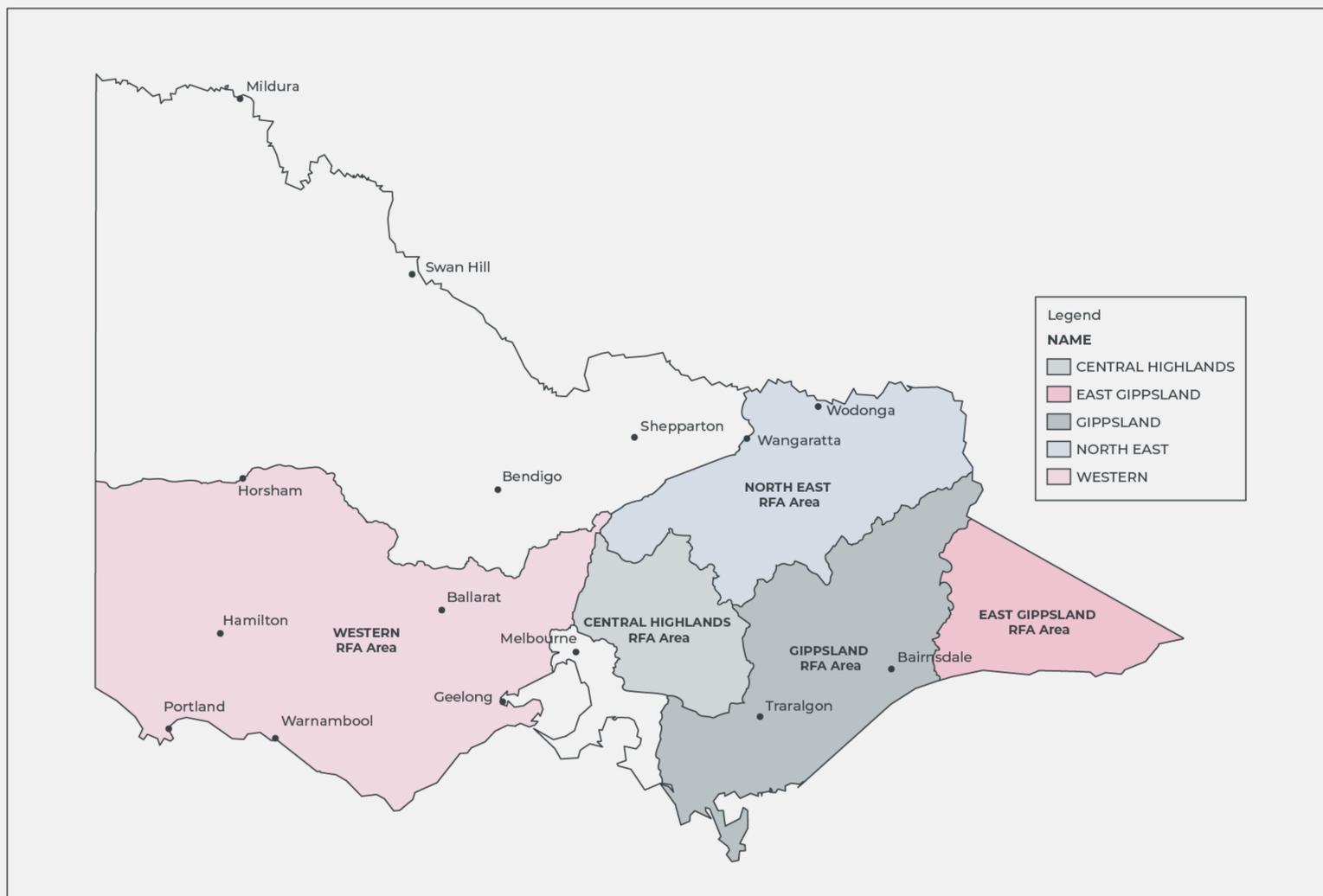
In instigating this engagement process on the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements, the Victorian and Australian governments have acknowledged the significant changes that have occurred since the RFAs were first signed 20 years ago, including the impacts of climate change, extreme weather events (including 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.

EAST GIPPSLAND REGION SUMMARY

EAST GIPPSLAND REGION

Below is a summary of the views and opinions gathered at events held in the Gippsland RFA region.

In Orbost, a drop-in session was held for general public to attend, along with two workshops, one for ENGOS and the other for timber industry. Note: a full list of events by each region is contained in 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 East Gippsland RFA region 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.

- “Expansion of CAR reserve system - more continuity and connectivity. Logging industry put on an equal footing as other extractive industries, which means removing exemptions from Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.”
- “Transition jobs out of logging and into forest management.”
- “I would like an understanding of how traditional owners managed fire risk and that to be incorporated into forestry policy.”
- “Climate change and climate science is moving ahead of existing policy”...“Deforestation and carbon emissions, both caused by controlled burns are exacerbating climate change and species extinctions, which is making the fire danger worse in the long run.”

- “Legislative supply to Marysville means we're locked in”...“20-year agreement seems out of step with the rate of change due to climate change.”
- “Multi-use forests. Tourism won't replace timber harvesting. It won't save this town. There are no new resources that can be built on nature-based tourism. If Lakes Entrance can't sustain tourism, then how can Orbost Sea to Summit replace the timber industry. There won't be more than 114 jobs in tourism (like there is in the local timber industry).”

In each section below, topics that we heard in response to these questions are listed in order of their frequency.

CHANGES IN THE REGION

Participants were asked to share what changes they have seen in their region in the 20 years since the previous RFAs were signed. For this region, some of the most common experiences shared were:

- Less natural resource available.
- Timber industry representatives feel that the RFAs have failed to protect businesses and jobs in the region, with many pointing to job losses, skill losses, economic decline in the region and consequent social decline.
- Growing concern about the impacts of climate change. One impact of that is that a drier climate is leading to more fires in the region.
- Decrease in native species, increase in invasive plants and animals.
- Dissatisfaction with planned burns.
- There has been a change in logging towards more intensive practices.

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

- Expand the CAR reserve system to create greater connection between protected areas.
- ENGOs want the CAR system to factor in climate change and fire.
- Industry wants a more strategic, landscape-scale approach to conservation.
- Create opportunities for integrating indigenous knowledge for its cultural value.
- Involve Traditional Owners in land management such as managing fire risk and controlling invasive plants and animals.
- In terms of meaningfully involving Traditional Owners and valuing their knowledge, people acknowledged that this is an important question but that it needs to be asked of Traditional Owners themselves.
- Move away from intensive practices such as clear-felling and towards selective harvesting.
- Take a wider view of forest uses beyond timber to include apiculture, tourism, carbon sequestration.

Theme 2: Long Term Stability of Forests & Forest Industries

- Industry wants a commitment of ongoing supply with a desire for certainty based on volume, rather than area. This could be supported by increased adaptability of RFAs through substitution of areas when places need to be reserved i.e. set aside from timber production due to threatened species or fire.
- Environmental groups similarly support an adaptability but their concerns tended to be about the RFAs having the capacity to protect areas if certain triggers - fire, large-scale disturbances or identification of threatened species - take place.
- Support local industry to engage in value-adding of timber resources.

- Community members were in favour of transition towards an increase in tourism jobs. At the same time there was a concern about the capacity of nature-based tourism to sufficiently replace timber jobs in this region.
- Consider alternative sources of timber including thinning and fire-salvage logging in National Parks.
- Transition towards plantations as part of the solution.
- Industry wanted a revisit to the first principles of the CAR reserve system
- Address climate change through the use of timber, which is seen as a renewable resource that sequesters carbon.
- Acknowledge the role the timber industry plays in contributing to the broader social and economic fabric of the region. More specifically, timber industry provides roads and infrastructure that support firefighting, that provide access for recreation and nature-based tourism, and access for other forest uses such as apiculture.

Theme 3: Governance & Management of Victoria's Forests

- There was a community-wide desire for more active land management for the control of fuel loads, and invasive plants and animals.
- Increase accountability for governments on their RFA commitments.
- Make decisions based on independent and well-funded scientific research.

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: EAST GIPPSLAND REGION

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?

Decline in employment.
Retracting areas where viable timber grows (e.g. ash).
Clear felled areas and then subsequent burning rolled in homogenous age class of timber - reduces effectiveness of apiary industry. For example, bees rely on blossom, nectar and pollen across a range of age classes to be a success. Can't get previous bee sites to be viable even with a 'buffer zone' around the site.
Landscape becoming drier with climate change - less rainfall.
Shift from selective logging practices to more intensive practices (clear-fell).
Increased severity and intensity of bushfires.
Planned burn season is getting larger.
Planned burns are getting hotter and less controlled.
Noticed decrease in wildlife.
Greater Glider population decline in East Gippsland due to their habitat area coinciding with logging areas. Loss of hollow-bearing trees. Exemptions from Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act have resulted in species decline. Old growth forest permanently lost. General biodiversity loss. Logging in fire refuges/unburnt forest post-bush fires.
Social and community aspect 20+ years ago - +3000 people. Now -2000 people. Young people moved away, aging population.
Jobs reduced e.g. Cann River 20 years ago had 3 mills now all closed.
Social/economically - only 2 shops assured to stay open.
Management of individual threatened species is not a sustainable outlook of maintaining timber supply. The previous RFA negotiation was focusing on species management. Managing a coupe level is unworkable. Pre-harvest surveys of each coupe can potentially establish instant reserve. When do you reach the max reserve area?
The RFAs have been undermined for the last 20 years. 30 mills to 3 mills. RFA has failed to provide long term sustainability to the industry. Degrade in size of sawlog forced to take small diameter trees because locked out of other areas. Areas lost for political reasons not scientific reasons.
Every year the area we can log gets smaller.
Decline in small towns. No confidence in the system and management to enable certainty and long-term horizon.

Significant change in land management - fewer skilled people on the ground, more weeds and pests.
More legally based action by Environmental Non-government Organisations (NGO).
Our knowledge of what East Gippsland timbers can be used for has grown exponentially - responding to market demand.

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

The real competitive advantage for the region is tourism. Let communities have exclusive licences to use the public land - so the counter entrenched disadvantage for tourism but also for forest management. For example, deer managers and facilities managers.
Continue the balance of National Parks and State Forest.
Accurate model predictions. Worry that decisions made to decrease harvest area-based on computer modelling results from changes in temperature (increasing 3 degrees Celsius) only, rather than also considering that lower success rate of re-seeding ash areas might be due to poor management (seeding too late).
Encourage more plantation timber - the type of trees need to be suitable to the area.
Forest management needs to take into account all forest values and uses (apiary and tourism).
We need to consume and to reduce the impact of climate change.
Need to start planting more forest.
Need more fire management practice. Need to stop planned burns.
Reduce impact of climate change.
Maintain work for communities (timber industry).
Smaller more intensive timber industry, value adding.
Move away from industrial timber harvesting process.
Expansion of Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative (CAR) reserve system - more continuity and connectivity. Logging industry put on an equal footing as other extractive industries, which means removing exemptions from Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. Transition jobs out of logging and into forest management. Logging plans in Victoria assessed by Federal Government as per other industries. Transition out of native forests. Consider full suite of forest values.
Instead at coupe scale do landscape scale. E.g. 40-hectare coupe reduced to 4 hectares due to buffers.
Volume based coupes/targets rather than area.
Resource security - can invest into industry - community knows future.
RFA need to do/supply something to ensure the social fabric of town remains.
Multi-use forests. Tourism won't replace timber harvesting. It won't save this town. There are no new resources that can be built on nature-based tourism. If Lakes Entrance can't sustain tourism, then how can Orbost Sea to Summit won't replace the timber industry. There won't be more than 114 jobs in tourism (like there is in the local timber industry).
Recognition of our world standard forestry system.
Australian Forestry Standard should be enough Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is not a good standard.
More adaptive management of forests - if something comes out add areas back in.
Less concentration of harvesting over a greater area.
Allow tree to be removed for fire burns a hazardous tree should be removed rather than left on the ground to be a fuel source - industry would contribute.

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

Populations of feral deer, pigs, and horses devastating Alpine bogs. This has increased in 20 years, maybe breeding but also more access.
VicForests compliance varies - need to improve compliance.
Need to stop clear-felling practices.
Need to think about jobs for regional communities - more value adding for the future.
More sustainable ways to manage fire. Thinning forests, Indigenous techniques, stop planned burns in old growth and rainforests. The regeneration is more fire prone. Rainforest has natural fire resistance.
People in the bush reducing fuel by hand.
More firefighters to protect community.
More weed control.
Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative reserve system going across multiple ecosystems. RFAs shouldn't be rolled over. Factor in whether there is adequate wood supply for next 20 years for this region. Application of environmental economic accounts to assess forest values. Account for fires as bushfires are an increased feature.
Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative (CAR) - still there - has been added to take areas away but not exchanged for another area. Landscaper scale surveys.
1st RFA - can improve on the whole Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative (CAR) system (review it). Complete review and go back to the basic principles.
The Commonwealth should hold the state to account for RFA accountability. The state hasn't upheld its agreement with Commonwealth in upholding NO NET LOSS.
More enforceable on the state, the commonwealth.
A guarantee of supply that both Governments will support - to support the three existing mills perhaps over 5 years.
A recognition of the additional services provided by the industry e.g. for fire fighting.
Allow thinning for regrowth, to enable bigger trees some threatened species, more resilient under climate change and better supply - connecting harvesting to ecological outcomes.
Renew RFAs sooner so you don't have a cliff.
More regular reporting to give people confidence (not sticking to timeframes in the past has impacted the social licences) and confidence in the RFA agreement.
More active management of weeds.

Q4. How do you use forests in your region?

Hiking, Wildlife spotting.
Hiking, camping, quiet time, groups for good physical and mental health. This is limited because when people can come to the forests during holiday time, 'prescribed' burning is happening and you can't breathe from the smoke.
I use the forest for quiet driving to access waterfalls, find special flora and the smell eucalyptus, mint and the earth.
Protection is not governed enough as many eco systems are being destroyed by: extensive man mad burning, rubbish dumping, closing rainforests, bikes/4x4's staying out of tracks, DELWP cutting back/economising our manpower, DELWP redeveloping researchers in plant species bio diversity. Feral animals, dogs and cats, pigs.

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

So much forest has already been destroyed. More sustainable techniques need to be developed like thinning undergrowth without burning or at least not burning so hot it is creating further climate change, contributing to the extinction of species.
Stop logging, stop burning. Grow more plants - especially undergrowth. Flowers, for insects to feed and fertilise.
I seriously wonder if RFAs can but: exclusive licences as concessions issued to community organisation to run eco-tourism maintain park facilities (tracks, bins, weeds, feral animal traps) These are long term ways to support local economy.
More manpower needed. More manpower knowledge and interest in ecology needed.
More regulation on clearing felling of overseeing of protected areas.
More manpower to check forest tracks.
Control the planned forest burns - make them smaller mosaics, make land owners aware of burns that could impact their properties.
Maintain more researchers and scientists to help retain fauna and flora that is under threat or extinction.
Incorporate respect for nature.
Better recognise carbon sequestration volume of forests - would generate jobs. Opportunity for jobs around park management: nature-based tourism. These need to be part of a transition from reliance on timber industry jobs to broader job opportunities. More money for wildlife to manage parks. Look at getting higher volume products out of less timber.
Activist researchers are distorting the picture - underplay observations of people who were here at the time.
Australian ecology has evolved with an environment of regular disturbance.
Regulatory frameworks deny adaptivity to disturbance. Lock it up and leave is not a good strategy.
Active and adaptive management is critical for healthy forests and diversity.
With lots of regular burning soil chemistry has changed, leading to premature dieback.
Need a landscape management approach - investing in small areas is a waste of resources - must look across all tenures.
Biodiversity is going backwards in national parks specifically set aside to protect them often no mention of state forests which have contributed to biodiversity.
Tourism - multiple use forest. Lost over 400 jobs in timber industry but have struggles to obtain jobs in tourism and hospitality. So, the Sea to Summit will not be able to replace the existing jobs in timber industry.
\$1.4 m of state money towards Emerald links project. This sort of money has not been given to assist the timber industry to improve methods/process/markets
Fabric of timber towns - families worked in timber and partners working in hospitality and tourism.
Emerald links project didn't ask the community.
Utilising fuel management practices - research - market this to get social license.
VicForests - do not market that they are the largest tree growing organisation in Australia.

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

Inadequate parks and reserves have left out high value areas, as we are seeing decline and need to build resilience in face of climate change. Larger reserve areas across altitude gradients and connectivity are more resilient. JANIS criteria insufficient as seeing species decline e.g. Greater Glider. Reservation targets not met and framework inadequate. Current Greater Glider prescription not working in East Gippsland as we are still seeing decline.
Recognise draw down of carbon from growing trees - Forestry industry has been good at growing trees.
Biased towards surveys in harvesting areas NOT across landscape (RFA region).
Being made on all incremental basis removing/fragmenting access to resource - contravenes 'no net loss' approach to biodiversity vs economic considerations.
System is fragmented and is unlikely to be managed.
Forest industry provides valuable infrastructure to manage forest estate, e.g. roads, fire fighting.

Q7. How could the environmental protections be improved?

Introduce impact assessments which are usually required for forest dependant wildlife, for any project that may have impact. Expansion of the reserve system. Environmental pest management programs. Opportunities for more research and forest monitoring. Have assessments for timber harvesting in same way as other proposal. Address the ongoing loss of hollow bearing trees. Monitoring to determine the effectiveness of conservation reserves. More changes/events that happen so that you can adjust management to address impacts e.g. Black Saturday fires.
Move away from coupe by coupe, species by species approach - back to landscape approach.
Focus of biodiversity surveys is biased towards harvested areas not across RFA landscape.
Need for more extensive fuel reduction program. Fuel reduction only mechanism to reduce fuel load over large areas.
Big burns - large regrowth - greater water use.

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

Non-Indigenous so unqualified to answer. Needs to consult local indigenous groups.
Engage with local elders who have easy accessed via health organisations in Orbost.
Traditional Owners would value having their aspirations heard for the management for forests.
Increasingly Traditional Owners need to come back in to the landscape - reduce fire risk, regenerate some species, at a broad scale.
Need to be matched with broad scale pest animal control.
Inclusion of Traditional Owners in fuel reduction activities.

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

I would like an understanding of how traditional owners managed fire risk and that to be incorporated into forestry policy.
By stopping to use outdated accounts by 'white authors' who misinterpreted practices due to lack of understanding of the meaning 'country'.
Encourage growth of native edible plant species by Aboriginal people - education work possibilities.
Encourage Aboriginal people to explore tourism to work by exploring through the forest area.
More use of bush tucker plants could be used to provide opportunities in tourist adventures, we need more education in what is available.

Q10. What opportunities could the RFAs provide to support access to and traditional use of forests by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people?

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Engage with local elders who have easy access via health organisations in Orbost.
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Need to be matched with broad scale pest animal control.
Inclusion of Traditional Owners in fuel reduction activities.

Q11. How could the RFAs enable the legal rights of Traditional Owners to partner in land management and seek economic and cultural opportunities to be realised in future forest management?

I would like an understanding of how traditional owners managed fire risk and that to be incorporated into forestry policy.
By stopping to use outdated accounts by 'white authors' who misinterpreted practices due to lack of understanding of the meaning 'Country'.
Encourage growth of native edible plant species by Aboriginal people - education work possibilities.
Encourage Aboriginal people to explore tourism to work by exploring through the forest area.
More use of bush tucker plants could be used to provide opportunities in tourist adventures, we need more education in what is available.

Q12. How could the RFAs consider climate change and other large-scale natural disturbances (including bushfires)?

<p>Pretty simple really: No large-scale timber industry is appropriate in the age of climate change. Shift direction completely and grow forest, not cut it down. The frequency of big fires is increasing. There is almost nothing we need timber for that can't be done with other materials, especially recycled paper and plastic.</p>
<p>Consideration to be built around keeping forests intact rather than disturbing this eco system by logging and burning, impacting negatively on our flora and fauna. Just check our record, it is really disturbing.</p>
<p>The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) fibre and used supply assessment report (April 2017) - provides a picture of wood supply under 2080 climate scenario, that seems to be scare management. How is this model determined? This shouldn't be used to make decisions about wood supply in the future. How can you validate that this is correct?</p>
<p>Carbon emission and deforestation are both major driver of climate change and are both caused by planned burns, making future fire conditions worse. The planner needs 30% of old growth forest to continue to be sustainable for human life. South East Australia is a deforestation hotspot. We need to regrow our forest to reverse this climate crisis, not burn more.</p>
<p>Stop clear-felling - Selective logging - value added products.</p>
<p>Lifestyle is the problem (we consume too much) we are all part of the problem.</p>
<p>Corruption - Leaders not compromised.</p>
<p>Water Catchments - Stayaway grown water courses.</p>
<p>Stop fuel reduction burning - back burn when fires are threatening communities.</p>
<p>Lack of jobs - tourism in forest, amend link.</p>
<p>Lack of science info regarding biodiversity and climate crisis - University - focus on technology, water, fauna, jobs, people, information.</p>
<p>Truck driving industry- few jobs - truck drivers only.</p>
<p>Stop selling native forest for paper products/bio mass/too much timber and no jobs created.</p>
<p>Expand the reserve system to increase resilience - need to look at the resilience of systems in the face of climate change. Climate change needs to be reflected in monitoring. Time scales of monitoring need to be reduced – more frequent monitoring triggered by natural disturbances.</p>
<p>Fuel reduction burning over larger areas to reduce intensity of fires to save forest values soil and water values.</p>
<p>Factor in effect of regrowth on water catchments after large fires.</p>
<p>Use mechanical means to reduce fuel load e.g. North America and Australia.</p>
<p>Address climate change by using sustainable and renewable materials - such as timber. Population is increasing.</p>
<p>Forest industry is good at growing forests and this is important skill for climate change mitigation.</p>
<p>Flora and fauna has adapted to fire and evolved. Need to change to 'lock it up and leave' framework to allow for adaptive management.</p>
<p>Loss of regular burning = soil chemistry has changed = forest die back. Need to think about fire regimes.</p>
<p>Include Traditional Owner fire management.</p>
<p>Biased scientists underplay benefit of Traditional Owner burning particularly in high country.</p>
<p>Too much landscape burning will lead to loss of ground flora and impact small dwelling fauna species.</p>

Q13. How could the RFAs better address industry sustainability?

Better integration of apiary and forest harvesting activities.
Fire regimes (especially hot coupe burns) impact opportunities for apiary for the long term.
Clear-fell operations are problematic for apiary e.g. Not enough mature trees retained to provide blossom. Retention of mixed age class in forest adjoining or nearby apiary sites is crucial.
Direct impacts to apiary sites must not happen (its paid for and production is reliant on it). Selective harvesting of buffers around sites in manageable.
Planned burns further degrade forest and add to the destruction of logging. if forest were logged instead of burnt, it would at least half the destruction, leaving more forest left for the future (not license to take twice as much forest).
By researching and adapting best practice felling. More selective felling, not gung-ho clear-felling. Plant and use more pine species for industry. Plant more varied species of hardwood eucalypt.
Sawlog when sent to sawmill deliberately split so it could be used as woodchips, this resulted in loss of sawlog due to lack of supervision at coupe site. Better compliance required.
Transition out of native forest, in order to get higher value product from younger forests. Legislated supply of loads.
Manage at a landscape vs coupe level.
Education and demonstration of good industry practices.
Revisit underpinning of Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative (CAR) reserve system.
Rely on survey for what's actually there and manage species at a landscape level.
Stop locking up land and limiting management in national parks.
Allow salvage logging in National Parks.
Volume of timber to sure up industry in East Gippsland - jobs and community.
Take a strategic rather than tactical response to species protection.
Floor minimum supply of resource (timber).
Infrastructure needs in Victoria can be met by Victorian forest.
Term for contract, 5-7 year minimum required for investment in timber industry.

Q14. How could the RFA's encourage investment and new market opportunities for forest-based industries (including the forests and wood products industry, tourism, apiary and emerging markets such as carbon)?

Ecotourism is also a marketing opportunity, which will disappear if all the forest were burnt, logged.
Clear-felling also affects birds, animals. Retaining trees and forest will generate more rain and water which we badly need as climate change becomes more pronounced. Clear-felling affects the undergrowth where many species live. We need more plantation timbers to replace logging of native forests. Some farmers are now growing trees as a source of income.
By planting more trees.
Making people more aware.
Build a university - science forestry.
Plant more flowering native trees and shrubs.
Encourage bees and other insects.
For tourism - eliminate feral hunters, animals and birds.
Encourage eco-tourism at edge of forests who have a clear plan and empathy of forest vegetation.
Set up native fauna shelter.
More thinning operations should be allowed. Increases growth of forest. Good for timber industries.
Create jobs in other forest-based sectors, not just timber-to-timber. i.e. native forest to plantations, instead other roles in forest management and pest control and nature-based tourism. Consider new milling technologies to handle younger, smaller trees so that they are not pulped.
Ensure resource security so everyone can have a sense of what the future holds.
Local processing to keep jobs here.
Utilisation of waste products.
Thinning program for fuel reduction which can support industry locally.
Government support to sawmill operators to determine how to manage new products, funding to industry matched to what is funded in conservation e.g. Sea to Summit trail.
Promotion of timber product required more coordination and forest management from government and industry.
Knowledge of timber species performance has increased to address market demand.

Q15. 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)?

Supportive apiary planning with fire regimes: hot coupe burns are detrimental, frequency of planned burns impact understorey regrowth which is not good for apiary - blossom from nature trees, aerial burns too hot.
Support would be in form of a complete rethink on forest manufacture - correct practice inhabits any realistic opportunities for isolated communities to emerge into the eco tourism industry. Correct burning and logging practising only gives jobs for a restricted amount of jobs in central towns - it does not allow an increased amount of money into the bush to help local communities thrive.
RFAs as they are probably can't. They're hopelessly compromised. A complete rethink and restructure is required.
Climate change and climate science is moving ahead of existing policy. The increased number of bush fires and extended fire season is almost doing its own planned burns. There is a new understanding of how established forest have their own water retaining and fire reductant properties, while forests which is burned or logged, grows back scribbly creating a further fire risk. Deforestation and carbon emissions, both caused by controlled burns are exacerbating climate change and species extinctions, which is making the fire danger worse in the long run.

Importance of environmentally focused land. Need to consider resilience in the face of climate change. Focus around on specific values e.g. hollow-bearing trees. Regular reviews and trigger for review if an unexpected event happens. Needs to be more funding for management. Draw on known research to guide, don't compromise because it doesn't suit the timber industry.
Native Forest harvesting can assist with fire management. Plantations need to be started now.
Australia's forests have adapted to fire for over 60,000 years - therefore our forests have adapted to disturbance. Locking forests up in not ideal for species. Loss of regular burning has affected chemistry and diversity.
Promote Traditional Owner rights, management practices and cultural burning. This allows for species to thrive in a disturbed environment.
Fire management and pest control need to be integrated with that program.
Landscape management approach - not just based on tenure. Wild dog management is an example - needs to continue past National Park and State Forest boundary.
Need to hear some good stories on species management in state forest - not just national parks. Biodiversity and forestry co-exist.
Dispersed Comprehensive, Adequate, Representational (CAR) reserve system makes it harder to manage.
Being willing to substitute/swap areas.
Allow salvage logging in National Parks post fires.
Thinning and fuel load management - allows dangerous trees to be milled/used.
Extend pre-harvest surveys into National Parks.
Volume rather than area.
Landscape approach to forest management planning.

Q16. What areas of research would better equip us to sustainably manage Victoria's forests?

More research on the impacts of climate change on the distribution of ecosystems and species.
What species may thrive in different climates that could be used for forestry?
More manpower for research into threatened species.
More funding to allow for all the research and more manpower on the ground sustainability.
The impacts of planned burns on carbon emissions.
The impacts of planned burns on wildlife and on established and old growth forests.
How to manage waterways in planned burn areas.
Alternative fire management for planned burns-efficiency and impact, e.g. forest thinning and clearing.
Local indigenous fire management techniques.
Research in forest monitoring, looking at effectiveness of conservation, through the lens of climate change. More precautionary approach to management practices, with "how do we build more resilience' at the heart of the forest management regimes. More funding for proper research which will be acted on, regardless of whether findings are in conflict with industry interests. Publish new data on greater gliders in East Gippsland.
Activist/scientists are anti-forest are conducting research-biased research. Research needs to consider all threats - not just forestry/harvesting.
State forest resource inventory needs to be updated - is about 20 years old. Should utilise new technology.
Review requirements for viable species populations.
Research to better utilise resource - value added products, waste products.

Consultation with the community on the best use of the forest researchers.
Utilising harvesting techniques for better fire management.
Better silver culture techniques with better social licence to operate. Present in a way that is acceptable to the public.
Also need to better communicate outcomes of research with good news stories.

Q17. How could the RFA monitoring, review (including the five-yearly reviews) and reporting arrangements be improved?

By engaging more employees who are really interested in preserving forests.
Less office workers and more hands-on professionals.
Education - scientific knowledge of plants, animals and interaction.
More quarterly inspections of forests by foot to 'out of the way' places.
Reporting to be acted on, and to be more easily accessible to general public.
More funding.
Incorporate latest climate and ecological science ongoing basis. Need the flexibility for planned burns to be science driven and not industry driven. More supervision of burns - we drove past burn at night where there were embers everywhere, low visibility due to smoke. Whole large trees on fire, we were terrified.
Environmental impact of burns to be documented after each burn and feedback used to inform future burns - other sustainable methods to be investigated.
Monitoring and reporting on carbon sequestration. Potential for jobs in forest monitoring by expanding the reserve network. Monitoring needs to look at the effectiveness of conservation, including the effects of climate change and implementing new management regimes - climate change adaption. Reviews must be more regular - every year needs to be a trigger, such as an event (bushfire and drought). Needs more funding for parks and wildlife research. Monitoring for the sake of conservation, rather than for the sake of industry activity.
Need to monitor across the landscape - not just where forestry occurs. Both National Parks and state forest.
Should have professionals doing surveys, not just anyone - scientific basis.
Some logging coupes locked up even if surveys have not met threatened species "thresholds".
Seem to be finding more animals that are apparently endangered. At what point do we change the criteria.
Need a review of the Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative (CAR) reserve system. Need to look at the criteria that were used when the reserve system was established.
Reviews need to be on-time, caused problems for state and commonwealth government.
Monitoring needs to be across all land tenures.

Other Comments/Concerns

People in the region will need to rely more and more on tourism. Hard to generate on industry especially during the holidays, people are choked with smoke.
Benong Highway - very difficult to drive. Even when the logging trucks come towards you.
Cann River: Lots of unemployment. Very disadvantaged community. Cann River needs to move on. Tamboon inlet: fishing.
End to the RFAs - they haven't been working.
Have not had the proper environmental surveys.
Structure of forestry in Victoria is not correct.
Government vs semi-government.

Why are we building forestry / haulage roads?
Love wood - however it is not being harvested sustainably.
Better use of native timber - should not be used for firewood for example.
Coupes have been harvested and not regenerated.
Recycled plastics.
VicForests do a 180 turn and protects forests. Used to manage on a 100-200-year cycle.
Mechanised and all about money.
Increasing the forest area.
Water management and regeneration is vital - continues and connects areas - Natural pathways.
Jobs in growing trees and fire management - not in harvesting trees.
Patch work jobs.
Free Trade Agreements? Get rid of them. In agriculture reverse - Lower tariffs - certain circumstances.
More people to manage properly (on the ground). What happens to the science that is invested in? Goes nowhere?
We have concerns about using poison to control weeds in forest (phosphate).
Need better communication of planned burns - when they are planned and how long for.
More information on going fires and burns
Don't envy the decisions departments need to make.
Have more rubbish dump depot for free disposal of mattresses.
Legislative supply to Marysville means we're locked in. RFAs exist for exemption from Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. What is the scientific, social, economic basis for extending RFAs especially exemption from Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act? 20-year agreement seems out of step with the rate of change due to climate change.
The hazardous tree removal and trees removed for planned burnings should be utilised for product rather than left to add to fuel hazard.
VicForests have to do values checking for more species than before, gone away from a strategic plan.
Locally processed resource to keep jobs in town.
43% of jobs rely on timber industry. This needs to remain stable.
Not because the industry isn't viable - just lost areas.
30 years of logging have not cut a coupe that doesn't have a stump in it.
What are the scientists saying? The reserve system is so fragmented, it is impossible to manage. What emerging industries are there that can access once it's locked up? Adaptive management is when you can open areas that have been locked up. That would be good management, USA does it.
The Government has released \$1.4m for Sea to Summit, haven't seen this kind of money invested in research and development for milling. That \$1.4m will only fund a movement to shut down the local timber industry.
New Timber Release Plan (TRP) - but areas taken out immediately (45 coupes) for the new Sea to Summit trail without consultation with industry.
Bunnings are importing hardwood fence posts - shifting impact overseas.
Not a level playing field. The goal post keeps moving.
Policy uncertainty - the last 5 years have been particularly damaging.
Complexity in the regulation - very difficult to navigate and to plan ahead.
Without loggers you have fewer fire fighters with skills in heavy plant and equipment plus experienced in bush knowledge.

Start processes earlier the last-minute nature of RFAs, and timber release plan (TRP) and last-minute coupe closures seriously impacts people's wellbeing.

Move away from practical cycles for land management.

Lack of confidence in industry itself.

Importing timber creates a massive biosecurity/agriculture risk.

5 to 7 minimum term for contracts.

Better promotion, co-ordinated by governments to overseas markets.

