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### Laws failing to protect forests

Australia's forests, and the endangered species that live in them, are in decline, with our laws failing to protect them. And things are about to get worse under Government plans to hand over powers under Federal environment protection laws to the states.

In response, eight environment groups have turned to an international umpire to help combat the Commonwealth Government's attack on biodiversity laws.

The eight environment groups have petitioned the Convention on Biodiversity, the international body concerned with biodiversity protection, to investigate Australia's non-compliance with its obligations at international law. They have also informed the Convention about the government's plans to hand over its environment protection powers to the states, and warned of the impacts this could have on Australia's forests.

Felicity Millner, Director of Litigation at Environmental Justice Australia, said "We want the international community to know that Australia is failing to meet its international commitments to protect our forests and our threatened species."

The petition comes as it was announced today by the CSIRO that Australia is experiencing the fastest rate of mammalian decline in the world.

Sarah Rees, Director of MyEnvironment, said "Our recent court case in Victoria revealed that even as a globally recognised, endangered species like the Leadbeater's Possum reached 'critical' status due to low numbers, there was nothing we could do to stop the logging of its habitat under the state's laws."

"Our laws are failing us. Australia's forests are in danger and the State and Federal Governments are not serious about protecting them. We have to look elsewhere for the help we desperately need," said Ms Rees.

The submission contains statements from eminent scientists on the state of our forests and the impacts of native forest logging. The scientists' statements also draw attention to the decline of species, including mammals. In the statement, speaking about the Victorian Central Highlands, Professor David Lindenmayer stated "industrial scale clearfell logging... is the key threatening process in this ecosystem." Other scientists commented on the loss of biodiversity in Western Australia and East Gippsland.

**For more information, or a copy of the full petition, contact:**

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