

VicForests & Ethical Paper

The current situation

[MyEnvironment Inc](#) together with [The Wilderness Society](#), [Australian Conservation Foundation \(ACF\)](#) and [Healesville Environment Watch Inc](#) (HEWI) met with [Australian Paper](#) last week as part of Australian Papers stakeholder engagement process for their [Forest Stewardship council \(FSC\)](#) certification. This FSC certification is effectively Australian Papers green tick that the wood source comes from sustainable timber. Sustainability relates to economic, biodiversity, regeneration, and social performance measures.

The Forest Stewardship Council have recently deemed Victorias native forests to be high risk and therefore the operations of [VicForests](#) have been brought into question and they need to show that their operations are sustainable. It is looking likely that VicForests will not be able to demonstrate this and therefore, [Australian Paper](#) may loose their green tick because they make up approx 20% of their wood supply. The consequence of this is that some major paper resellers together with those who have signed onto the [ethical paper](#) pledge have said that they will no longer stock reflex if it is shown to be sourced from unsustainable practices. i.e. If it is coming from endangered species habitat such as the Leadbeaters possum which it is.

This is summarised in an article in the Age "[Green Paper needs Reflex Action](#)" by Ben Buttler

VicForests is a Government Business Enterprise, specifically exempt from the ACCC, responsible for logging about 2000 ha or 500 coupes per year from Native forests. Approximately 80% of the wood goes to woodchips. The Agriculture Minister Hon. Peter Walsh has [threatened local councils](#) that have chosen to support the ethical paper campaign and has divided local communities by using VicForests re location of jobs as a political football. Clearly this issue is much more complex than what is being advocated by some industry groups and the truth of the matter is that it is now in the hands of the FSC auditors who are evaluating the practices of VicForests and the Government for their performance in sustainability.

A recent article in the Mountain Views Mail found that the [Councils Ethical Stand has been Vindicated](#)

Origins of the campaign

Fifteen councils and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) passed a motion in 2008/2009 to oppose logging by VicForests in Melbourne's water catchments. These councils represent approximately 1.7 million Victorians. VicForests are well aware that their practices are in conflict with the best public benefit. The Government has not taken action and there are no current scientific studies that support logging of our water catchments. Six (6) out of ten (10) catchments are open to logging and a DSE [wood and water study](#) showed that approximately 16 Giga litres of water is lost per year due to logging and that figure is expected to double.

Following the lack of action by Government a meeting called "[Our Dissapearing forests](#)" was held in Healesville in June 2010 to a packed hall of 350 concerned residents to learn the issues around VicForests logging practices. Presenters included; Steve Meacher (Healesville Environment watch Inc) , Cr Jeanette McRae (Ryrie Ward, Yarra Ranges Council), Cr. Samantha Dunn (Lyster Ward, Yarra Ranges Council), Bernard Mace (Save Mt St Leonard), Luke Chamberlain (The Wilderness Society) and Adam Menary (MyEnvironment inc). For online videos of all of the presentations [Click here](#)

After the meeting attendees were invited to participate in an [online survey](#) and 98 or approximately 30% participated. Full details of the survey can be [found here](#).

The majority (76.5%) of participants said that they would like to engage in a boycott campaign against products that come from native forests. Hence the [Ethical paper website](#) and campaign was created.

VicForests Major Issues

VicForests attempted to log the face of Mt St Leonards facing Healesville, and after community outrage removed the two coupes [click here to see what they have done](#)

VicForests have been approved to log the face of Mt St Leonards facing Yarra Glen. This logging is expected to commence later this year [click here to see modelling of future views from Yarra Glen](#)

VicForests have recently been fined for over logging [click here for details](#)

VicForests have been found to be in the wrong intending to log endangered species habitat by the Supreme court case of Brown Mountain. The case found that they should have been doing scientific pre logging surveys for high conservation value forests such as the Mountain Ash in the Central Highlands and they were not. [Click here for details](#) and click here for [Review of Brown Mountain Findings](#)

VicForests has just been caught out allowing whole logs that were supposed to be salvaged for use in Australia to be exported unlawfully [click here for details](#)

VicForests have never made a profit and are subsidised by the Victorian taxpayer to the tune of approximately 10 million dollars per year. They are also supposed to pay a royalty back to the state of approximately 3% of total turnover which they have never paid being approximately 4.5 Million per year. [Read VicForests has credit extended](#) and click here for [VicForests Operations Condemned](#)

Logging of native forests reduces water flows into our water catchments by approximately 20 billion litres per year (that is the approximately the volume of the Maroondah dam each year) click here for Age Article [We cant drink woodchips](#)

VicForests sell native forests for woodchips undercutting tax payer subsidised tonne and they are specifically exempted from the ACCC

Native Forests Logging is now Unlawful - Under Section 15 C of the sustainable timber act VicForests and the DSE are supposed to report to a sustainability charter. The performance measures are the State of the forest report (2/3 of data missing) and the EPA Audits (have been done last year for the first time in 4 years) and data shows that the logging of native forests is unsustainable. [See TRP Submission 2011](#)

MyEnvironment have found cases of unlawful logging that have been investigated and supported by DSE but VicForests have chosen to ignore recommendations to fine contractors. [Click here for unlawful stream logging in the headwaters of the Goulburn.](#)

Logging native forests is having big carbon emission implications [click here for more](#) and read here for a report on [Carbon Forests Revealed](#)

Logging is causing the extinction of our faunal emblem the Leadbeaters possum [click here for details](#)

Logging could increase bushfire risk in mountain ash forests [read more](#)

If re elected the Labour government was planning to Axe and scrap VicForests to be replaced by an agency to value water, carbon and other forest values [read more](#)