



Minister for Environment and Climate Change

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Ms Sarah Rees and Ms Amelia Young
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29 JAN 2013

Dear Ms Rees and Ms Young

MANAGEMENT OF VICTORIA'S NATIVE FORESTS

Thank you for your letter of 25 October 2012 regarding the management of Victoria's native forests.

The Victorian Government takes the protection of our natural environment seriously. Victoria has precious ecosystems and we are committed to preserving our native species and habitat for the enjoyment of future generations. More than 3.5 million hectares of Victorian native forest (half the area of forest in the state) are permanently protected in national parks and conservation reserves.

The government is committed to sustainable timber production in Victoria. Where timber harvesting operations are permitted, they are conducted in accordance with a comprehensive regulatory framework.

VicForests, the state-owned company that manages forest harvesting, is required to comply with management prescriptions for minimising impacts on threatened species and other environmental values as outlined in the Central Highlands Management Plan. This plan includes the Mt St Leonard area. This means that VicForests is legally required to regenerate every area of forest that it harvests.

Timber harvesting occurs on only 0.08 per cent of Victoria's 7 million hectare public native forest estate annually. The timber sourced from public forests is used for quality hardwood products such as furniture, flooring and other building materials, as well as in writing and office paper.

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Timber production operates within world-standard forestry management practices that are subject to continuous improvement and are scientifically based to ensure forest values are recognised and conserved. VicForests is certified under the Australian Forestry Standard which is internationally recognised by the world's largest forest certification scheme.

The government is delivering a \$1.86 million project to collect new information on some of the state's rarest inhabitants including Leadbeater's Possums. By focusing on the priority areas for threatened species we can make sure the Forest Management Zoning Scheme in Victoria is appropriate for the long-term conservation of threatened species.

A responsible balance can be achieved in Victoria with a sustainable, long-term native forestry industry guaranteeing employment and prosperity for thousands of families, and supplying quality hardwood timber for use, whilst at the same time protecting the important environmental assets and native species valued by all.

I am not available for a meeting, however, I thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan Smith', written over a white background.

THE HON RYAN SMITH MP
Minister for Environment and Climate Change