



Monday 15 October, 2012

Dear Minister Ryan Smith,

For over a decade now, our organisations have advocated for the protection of Victoria's native forests from woodchipping.

After thirty years of over-logging, and the impacts of the massive fire events of recent years, the situation for both conservation and the Victorian wood products industry is more dire than ever.

We have sought, over time, resolution to the native forest debate in this state with various industry stakeholders and governments of both persuasions.

Incremental conservation gains over the years, while bolstering the protected area estate, have not yet resolved ongoing native forest logging controversies. Nor have they innovatively reformed the native forest logging industry, the future of which lies in effectively exploiting the plantation estate which is mature, and sufficient in volume to meet all pulplog requirements, and a good proportion of existing and projected sawlog needs.

Under this government's watch, the state's animal emblem, the Fairy (Leadbeater's) Possum is being driven to extinction as VicForests' logging operations are increasingly concentrated in the remaining, green, unburnt forests of the Central Highlands.

It is our view that your Liberal-National government is ill-advised in its approach to forest management. Recent proposals to reform the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004* seek to entrench the loss-making native forest logging industry for at least another two decades.

The high levels of community concern are only increasing in intensity as logging moves into ever more contentious areas; areas controversial from both from environmental and social amenity perspectives when logged.

We have now the unfortunate and ridiculous situation where the tourism industry in the Yarra Valley in being directly undermined by logging operations scarring the panorama of the valley for the sake of a few dozen jobs and to supply Australian Paper with tax-payer subsidised pulplogs to manufacture Reflex copy paper.

The logging of Mt St Leonard has continued despite many reasoned appeals from moderate and concerned local residents that it be stopped.

These are residents who fought to save their homes and local forests from the 2009 bushfires. They are appalled they now find themselves having to defend these same forests from the state government's logging agency.

The economic and environmental imbalance of the situation is not escaping the electorate.

We are writing to seek a time to meet with you to discuss these issues at your earliest convenience.

We are most concerned to better understand your viewpoints as a Liberal member of this Parliament about the ongoing logging of forests that escaped the 2009 bushfires, forests that are now important refugia for a range of threatened plants and animals.

We look forward to establishing a time to meet with you. Please contact either of us on the details below.

We look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,

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