



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry: Inquiry into ecosystem decline in Victoria

Hearing Date: 3 December 2020

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Kylie White, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and
Dr Mark Norman, Parks Victoria

1. Ms BATH Page no. 24

Question asked.

So my question is: would Parks Victoria and/or DELWP be prepared to endorse a recommendation that Parks Victoria and other DELWP reserves meet those same standards, so go in and have an audit management program similar to productive forests?

Response:

- (1) Victoria's public land estate is made up of a range of land management classifications, including state forests, parks, and reserves. DELWP is the public land manager for state forests.
- (2) Victoria's forests support environmental, cultural, community and industry uses. There are a number of existing monitoring, audit and reporting programs for forests and forest management.
- (3) The Victorian Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) provide for sustainable management and use of Victoria's forests within RFA regions. The modernised Victorian RFAs, signed in March 2020, include stronger checks and balances through outcome-based reporting to inform five-yearly reviews, the ability to initiate Major Event Reviews, new audit provisions for evaluation of RFA performance and identification of remedial actions. This supports the ongoing effective operation of the RFAs and Victoria's forest management system in relation to Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES), the Comprehensive, Adequate, and Representative reserve system, timber harvest levels, cultural heritage, recreation, and ecosystem services. The RFAs are reported on annually:



<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry/policies/rfa/regions/victoria/annual-meeting-communique-290321>

- (4) The *Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting 2014* (the Code) is the primary regulatory instrument for the management of timber harvesting in Victoria's forests. The Code is currently under review, and public consultation on Engage Vic recently closed. The changes proposed are intended to ensure the Code is clear, accurate and enforceable.
- (5) The proposed changes include a draft Forest Management Zoning Accountability Framework. The Accountability Framework will make DELWP's process of forest zoning more transparent. This framework commits for the first time to comprehensive public reporting on the extent to which zoning commitments have been undertaken and an analysis of the adequacy of the zoning in achieving intended outcomes. This will ensure the DELWP Secretary's actions across forest management zoning will be transparent and accountable.
- (6) The Conservation Regulator is responsible for ensuring that timber harvesting operations in Victoria's state forests are planned and conducted in accordance with relevant environmental law. The Conservation Regulator has an integrated approach to regulating commercial forestry, which includes through conducting proactive inspections, independent audits, compliance investigations and through assessing third party allegations of non-compliant logging. <https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/forest-management/forest-audits>
[Timber harvesting regulation | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](#)
[Forest audits | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](#)
https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-01/FINAL_YearinReview_2019_2020.pdf
- (7) To further support these actions, the Victorian government has invested \$18.3 million in forest protection surveys to detect forest and biodiversity values so they can be better protected in areas planned for timber harvesting. Further information is available here: <https://www.vic.gov.au/forest-protection-survey-program>.
- (8) The Victorian Forest Monitoring Program is a statewide forest monitoring information system. The program assesses the extent, state and sustainable development of Victorian forests. All data is for long term trend detection and prediction of type and severity of future changes. Findings can influence effective land management policy and decision making. The program provides a platform that meets statutory reporting obligations.



- (9) Further, the Victorian Government produces a State of the Forests Report every five years under obligations of the *Sustainable Forest (Timber) Act 2004*. The Victorian State of the Forests Report assesses progress towards sustainable forest management for the full range of forest values.