



The Committee Manager
Standing Committee on Environment and Planning
Parliament House, Spring Street
East Melbourne
VIC 3002

By email: ecosystems@parliament.vic.gov.au

6th May 2021

Dear members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning,

Re: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria: Further questions on notice

- What financial or in-kind support, direct or indirect, if any, did you receive from the Wilderness Society in your recent Court action against VicForests?

To facilitate our Court action against VicForests it has been necessary for us, a not-for-profit community-based group, to raise several hundred-thousand dollars. This has been done mainly through social media campaigns and the successful results are testament to wide-based and generous community support for our case.

We do not intend to breach the confidentiality of donors by responding further to this question. If this is a proper question within the Terms of Reference, we suggest it be directed to The Wilderness Society so that they can confirm, if they so choose, whether or not they contributed to or supported our case.

We note that VicForests' costs to date have been in excess of \$5.5 million. This is many times more than our costs.

- What support do you provide to anti-timber protesters including encouraging these activities via social media?

As explained in our earlier response to Ms Bath's question on notice (email dated 19 March 2021), a retweet does not imply endorsement. It is simply sharing of an item that followers may find of interest. Friends of Leadbeater's Possum does not provide support to anti-timber protesters.

- What is your justification for entering hazardous workplaces and putting the safety of protesters and timber workers at risk?

We do not enter hazardous workplaces.

As the committee is aware, Friends of Leadbeater's Possum Inc. has chosen to act on alleged unlawful logging through the Federal Court. As previously explained (Transcript 10 March 2021,

Friends of Leadbeater's Possum Inc., P O Box 1175, Healesville, Victoria 3777

pp. 54-55), the Court has found that logging was, or would have been, carried out unlawfully in 66 coupes.

We note that Safe Work Australia states that the forestry industry has one of the highest fatality rates of all industries - https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/industry_business/forestry-work. Hazards listed include hazardous manual tasks, exposure to chemicals, falling objects, falls from height and the operation of plant and equipment.

The **Forestry operations risk profile** does not mention protestors or forced cessation of work as factors contributing to risk in the workplace. We are not aware of any evidence that a timber worker has been put at risk by protests or by being forced to cease hazardous work, although this is commonly claimed, without substantiation, by industry lobbyists.

- What appreciation do you have for timber communities, many of which are in regional Victoria, touched by bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic?

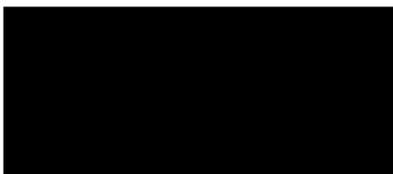
We have great appreciation for timber communities, the vast majority of which (>68%) base their activities around plantations (softwood, 55% and hardwood, 13.5%) that already provide most of our timber resources (see Schirmer, *Socio-economic characteristics of Victoria's forestry industries*, 2010 and Schirmer, *Socio-economic impacts of the forest industry Victoria*, March 2018).

It is because of our concern for communities, including those who, like us, are in regional Victoria and have been touched by bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, that we are calling on the Andrews government to immediately release transition funds so that native forest workers can plan orderly transitions to more secure futures in sustainable industries, instead of making them wait until 2024, or until the industry inevitably collapses as timber resources are exhausted.

- How many of your activities take place in parks and reserves?

Our main member activities each year, excluding the AGM, are a Picnic to celebrate the rediscovery of Leadbeater's Possum (3 April 1961) and habitat regeneration planting days. The picnic is held at the rediscovery site, Cambarville, in the Yarra Ranges National Park. Planting days are conducted in the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve, in the Upper Yarra Valley. In 2017 we also mounted an exhibition to mark the 150th Anniversary of the description of Leadbeater's Possum as a new species (McCoy 1867). For this we rented space at the Forest Discovery Centre in Toolangi, which is located in a Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ). We recently participated with Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater in a celebration of the 50th Anniversary of our two eponymous species being proclaimed Victoria's faunal emblems (March 1971). This event was held at Melbourne Zoo, in Royal Park.

Yours faithfully,



President

Friends of Leadbeater's Possum Inc., P O Box 1175, Healesville, Victoria 3777