

My submission covers my opposition to any possibility of SPZs being swapped back into timber production in East Gippsland and why I think this is a bad idea.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries.

I am writing to ask that Special Protection Zones in East Gippsland not be returned to the logging industry in some kind of “exchange” for the recent National Park additions.

All of those special protection zones were areas that were originally recommended by scientists for protection either because of the presence of threatened species or the biological significance of the local ecosystem as a whole. Reasons for the protection of each SPZ were given in the East Gippsland Forest Management Plan (DCNR, 1995) and many of these were portions of larger sites of significance that had already been reduced in size. (Ref: scientific survey reports produced by the Victorian Government in the late 1980s or early 1990s commonly known as “Block Reports”).

I was involved in the successful campaign to save the Goolengook forest and can therefore claim to be a stakeholder. This forest had originally contained seven sites of significance which were later reclassified as Special Protection Zones. The Special Protection Zones were considerably smaller than the original Sites of Significance. (Ref: Goolengook Block Report Lobert et al 1991). The fact that all of Goolengook has since been accorded National Park Status, rather than just the Special Protection Zones confirms that there is a defensible argument to suggest that the Special Protection Zones are in fact undersized, and hence that any swapping of SPZs back to the industry would be scientifically questionable at best.

I also note that there is no automatic requirement in the East Gippsland RFA for areas to be released from existing reserves whenever a new reserve is created.

Many of East Gippsland’s protected Forests are already at risk due to logging of the unprotected forests around them increasing the risk of dangers such as fire and invasion by weeds, and feral species. One Victorian scientist described them to me as being “highly buffer dependent”.

Finally I have seen many of these Special Protection Zones myself and they are magnificent.

In conclusion I believe that some of the most biologically significant ecosystems in Australia lie in East Gippsland inside SPZs that may be at risk of being swapped back to the industry. Please don’t do this.

John Fraser