



RFA Review – Submission  
Department of Sustainability and Environment

28 February 2010

Dear Ms Wallace,

Please find attached a submission to the Draft Report on progress with implementation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements for your consideration.

We request to meet with you to discuss this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Birrell  
on behalf of the Otway Ranges Environment Network and the Melbourne Water Catchment Network



**Submission to the  
Draft Report on progress with implementation of the  
Victorian Regional Forest Agreements**

Otway Ranges Environment Network  
Melbourne Water Catchment Network

Written by Simon Birrell  
February 2010

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**Recommendation 1**

Formally acknowledge that the West Regional Forest Agreement has been cancelled.

**Recommendation 2**

Acknowledge that the major changes to RFAs demonstrate that all five RFAs in Victoria lack broad community confidence and the State Governments has, appropriately, not legislated to make the RFA agreements legally binding.

**Recommendation 3**

The Victorian State Government should make the Commonwealth government acknowledge the failure of the RFAs in Victoria which account for half of all signed RFAs in Australia.

**Recommendation 4**

Acknowledge that failure of the West RFA process to address water issues before the RFA was signed significantly contributed to major changes occurring to the West RFA after it was signed; these changes occurred as a consequence of policy announcement during the November 2002 State election.

**Recommendation 5**

Acknowledge that the result of failure to investigate key issues, such as the importance of forest for water supply, during Central Highlands RFA processes means that major changes such as a logging ban within the Melbourne catchments still need to be resolved.

**Recommendation 6**

Accept that the ultimate RFA outcomes were biased towards logging, particularly where peak conservation groups did not make a large effort to participate in the process.

**Recommendation 7**

If the State Government were to rezone 70,000 ha of State forest as a water catchment area where logging is totally excluded then that must be regarded as a minor change to the Central Highlands RFA in order to be consistent with the approach the State and Federal Governments are taking to the current Victorian RFA review process.

**Recommendation 8**

SPZs can remain off-limits to logging as so much potential sawn-timber is being sold off as woodchips. Conservation groups are totally opposed to SPZ being regarded as potential new sources of woodchip logs given there is no definition of what defines a sawlog driven industry. The East Gippsland RFA is technically excluded from this discussion of maintaining timber production capacity if area available for logging is changed.

**Recommendation 9**

Given the increasing scientific evidence that native forest logging increases wildfire risk, the RFAs should be revised to acknowledge this increase in risk and management changed to decrease the risk of wildfire due to logging.

**Recommendation 10**

Given logging affects rainforests' ability to act as a natural firebreak, the RFAs should be revised to ensure logging practices are not allowed close to rainforest.

## 1 Background and introduction

The Otway Ranges Environment Network (OREN) was the key group that drove the campaign to create the Great Otway National Park and banning logging on native forests on public land in the Otways in 2008.

The Melbourne Water Catchment Network (MWCN) is campaigning to stop logging in the Melbourne water supply catchments.

This submission deals specifically with the operation of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) in Victoria. These are:

- West Victoria – March 2000.
- Central Highlands Victoria – March 1998.
- East Gippsland Victoria – February 1997.

For the purposes of this submission, Draft RFA Review means “Draft Report on Progress with Implementation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs)”.

We request to meet with the ‘Independent Reviewer’ to discuss this submission.

Key points of this submission are:

- The West Victorian RFA was cancelled in 2002. This is articulated in detail in Appendix 1 and at: <http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/westrfadead.htm>
- The RFA process was never completed in Victoria as the Victorian State government has (quite rightly) not created the complementary legislation required by the RFAs to ensure the Victorian State Government is legally bound to adhere to these agreements.
- The Commonwealth Government, arguably for political reasons, failed to keep up with the land management changes that have continued to occur on land covered by the Victorian RFAs since they were signed.
- Domestic water supplies for major urban populations occur within public forested land included within Victorian RFA areas. The original terms of reference for the RFA process failed to acknowledge the competing economic issues surrounding water vs wood. The credibility of the Central Highlands RFA continues to be significantly undermined by this unresolved issue.
- The poor quality of environmental outcomes within the Victorian RFA agreements may have been further affected by the boycott of the RFA processes in Victoria by peak environment groups.
- The impacts of logging on wildfire and wildfire risk must be considered within the RFAs.

## 2 The West RFA was cancelled

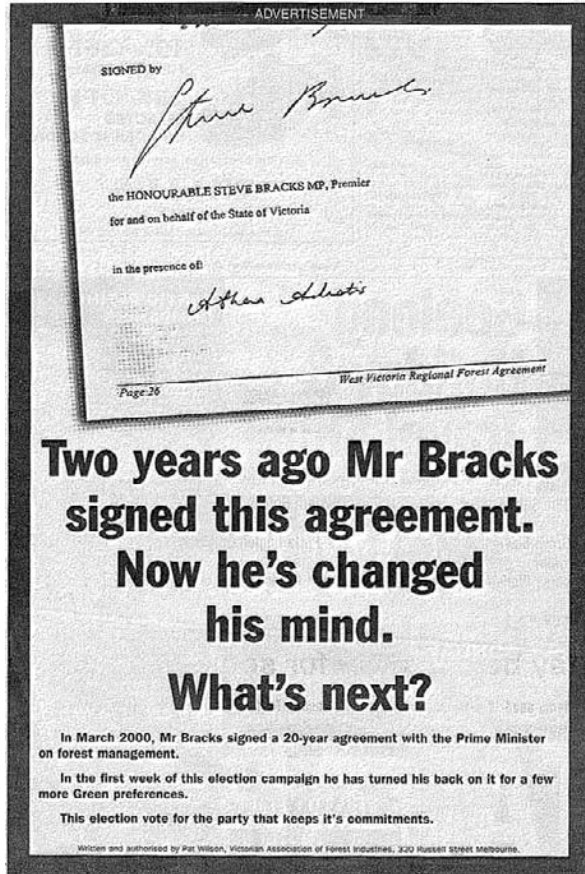
In late 2002 the West Victorian RFA was cancelled when the Victorian State Government was re-elected with policies to ban logging in the Otways by 2008 and create the Great Otway National Park.<sup>1</sup>

These decisions by the Victorian State government breached a number of clauses contained within in the West RFA.<sup>2</sup>

Failure to implement clause 93 is the main reason all of Part 3 of the West RFA has been breached.<sup>3</sup>

All stakeholders over the Otway logging debate acknowledged the West RFA was cancelled. This includes:

1. Former Premier of Victoria Steve Bracks announced the West RFA was cancelled in Parliament.<sup>4</sup>
2. In 2005 the Victorian Liberal Party supported the National Parks (Otways and other amendments) Bill that banned logging in the Otways and created a Great Otway National Park. The Liberal opposition acknowledged the Bracks Government had a mandate from the community which included tearing up West RFA. The Liberal Party had supported the West RFA during the 2002 election campaign.<sup>5</sup>
3. In Morwell during the 2002 Victorian state election, loggers attempted to apply political leverage on the State government to avoid other Victorian RFAs being cancelled.<sup>6</sup>
4. Public debate acknowledged that the West RFA was not a contract, had no state legislative backing and could be cancelled.<sup>7</sup>
5. Logging industry groups have publicly acknowledged many times that the West RFA has been cancelled. For example the following advertisement appeared in the Geelong Advertiser in November 2002.<sup>8</sup>



Other logging industry documents acknowledge the West RFA was cancelled, including the following.

- Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) 2003 Annual Report.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2006 the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) commissioned the Allen Consulting Group to write a report titled Victoria's Forest Industries - An Economic Impact. Section 5.2, titled Resource Security, highlights how the RFA process in Victoria has been undermined.<sup>10</sup>
- Editorial comment in leading newspapers:
  - Timber industry calls for sustainable access. By Phillip Hopkins. The Age. 23 June 2008.<sup>11</sup>
  - Victoria plans new strategy on timber. By Phillip Hopkins. The Age. 4 August 2008.<sup>12</sup>
  - Timber industry steps up campaign for native forest. By Phillip Hopkins. The Age. 7 June August 2006.<sup>13</sup>
- National Association of Forest Industries newsletter of Nov 27 2002.<sup>14</sup>
- Press releases and speeches made by former Federal Forest minister Ian McDonald in late 2002.<sup>15</sup>
- Extract from Federal Forestry Minister address to the Victorian Association of Forest Industries Dinner Melbourne, Australia, 22 November, 2002:

In March 2000 Mr Bracks personally signed the Western Victorian RFA with Prime Minister John Howard. Now this agreement, as you all know, placed

around 63 per cent of the west Victorian public forests in conservation reserves but it did ensure that around 37 per cent of those forests were to be available for sustainable harvesting. And not three years later Mr Bracks has announced a forest policy, which if implemented, will fundamentally breach that solemn agreement made between the State and Federal Governments, that he personally signed with the leader of our nation.

## **2.1 Broad community participation resulted in the failure of the West RFA**

During the RFA process OREN, Geelong Community Forum, Geelong Environment Council, Wombat Forest Society and Portland Field Naturalists all actively encouraged community participation in the RFA process.

This broad community participation successfully exposed the RFA process as a dishonest public relations tool of the native forest logging industry. The RFA process prioritised clearfell logging for woodchips, with relatively few sawlogs, but ignored non-timber forest values such as tourism, water and nature conservation.

Appendix IV of this submission provides an analysis of how State and Federal bureaucracy misused concepts in a failed attempt to mislead the community into believing the RFA was balanced and fair process.

Community sentiment turned against logging in the Otways partly due to the way in which the RFA process was conducted by State and Federal Governments. This community sentiment was then used by Premier Bracks as a fundamental justification for the ALP's new Otway policy position:

"We have listened to the community and we will now act on behalf of future generations to save the Otways," Mr Bracks said.<sup>16</sup>

This statement by the former Premier starkly contradicts claims that the West RFA got the consultation process right, and that the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) was adequate and based on quality science. Those that say the RFA process got it right are obviously living in fantasy land. The demise of the West RFA demonstrates the terms of reference for the RFA process and public consultation process was fundamentally flawed from the beginning.

As discussed in Appendix 1, many factors played into the community's rejection of the West RFA. Of the non-timber forest values such as nature conservation, tourism and water, it was logging in water catchments that was the most significant contentious issue – an issue which the wider RFA process had completely failed to adequately address.<sup>17</sup>

In the end the decision to cancel the West RFA was a democratic process; the public had the opportunity to vote on the matter through a State election. Despite an expensive advertising campaign by the logging industry to promote the RFAs, the public's re-election of the Bracks government was a resounding 'no confidence' vote in the RFA process.

After the 2002 election the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) scrapped the CAR reserve system (put in place through the RFA process). In its place VEAC recommended boundaries for a new Great Otway National Park and Otway Forest Park. The state government adopted all of VEAC's land management changes for the Otways and passed the *National Parks (Otways and other amendments) Bill* in 2005.<sup>18</sup>

In 2005, both the Labor and Liberal parties gave bipartisan support for the *National Parks (Otways and other amendments) Bill*.



See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

It should be noted that the Otways forest campaign between 1995 – 2002 was a regional community campaign. The campaign to stop Otways logging was not an initiative of the Greens political party or any of the large peak conservation groups in Victoria. For self interest political reasons the Greens political party and Wilderness Society campaigned against the creation of a Great Otway National Park and Otways logging ban in 2002.<sup>19</sup>

**Recommendation 1**

Formally acknowledge that the West Regional Forest Agreement has been cancelled.

### 3 The RFA process was never completed for all five Victorian RFAs Victoria.

In Victoria the RFA process was never actually completed. One of the "Parties" to the agreement (see RFA definition for "Parties"), the Victorian State Government, did not create complementary legislation. This breaches (for example) Section 93 of West RFA and Section 87 of the Central Highlands RFA.

On the 12 June 2002, the Liberal-dominated Victorian upper house tabled and passed a bill in an attempt to legislate all five Victorian RFAs. The ALP-dominated lower house did not even debate the bill and it never became legislation.

MP Gavin Jennings (current Victorian Environment Minister) made a speech in Parliament on behalf of the Government justifying reasons for not legislating the RFA process.

Despite what perhaps may have been a laudable intent of trying to reach longstanding agreements about access to forestry activity, RFAs have not been successful, by and large, in providing certainty and long-term protection to either the forests and their habitat or to workers and operators in the timber industry.<sup>20</sup>

This statement of no confidence in the RFA process helps explain why the Victorian government has delayed the 5 year RFA reviews.

The missing complementary legislation in Victoria fundamentally undermines the intent of the RFA process to 'lock up' forests for logging. The logging industry's lobby groups have expressed their disappointment many times. For example from the VAFI 2003 Annual report:

Under the Regional Forest Agreements, State Governments were expected to pass complementary legislation providing resource guarantees. The NSW and Tasmanian Governments have already done this. Victoria hasn't.<sup>21</sup>

Hence the Victorian Government has remained free to alter forest management with areas cover by Victorian RFAs without legislative restrictions.

The major changes to the Victorian RFAs include:

1. The cancellation of the West RFA.<sup>22</sup>
2. The Our Forests Our Future (OFOF) process that reduced logging rates statewide by 30% in 2002. This affected all Victorian RFAs. In early 2002 the Federal Forest Minister acknowledged that OFOF was a breach of all five Victoria. RFAs.<sup>23</sup>
3. In 2009 legislations was passed to make an additional 45,000 ha of forests in East Gippsland dedicated nature conservation reserves. This includes protection all the Goolengook block forest area and all National Rainforest Sites of Significance. This decision impacts on the East Gippsland RFA.
4. On 30 June 2008 the State Government announced new permanent reserves to protect 5500 ha of habitat for Baw Baw frog (within a new Special Protection Zone). In addition, approximately 10,000 ha of State forest was protected as permanent Leadbeater Possum habitat. This affected Central Highlands RFA.<sup>24</sup>

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

**Recommendation 2**

Acknowledge that the major changes to RFAs demonstrate that all five RFAs in Victoria lack broad community confidence and the State Governments has, appropriately, not legislated to make the RFA agreements legally binding.

## 4 Commonwealth failed to keep up with Victorian RFA developments.

As discussed in section 3, at least 50% of the RFAs signed Australia-wide are now being used only as a management guide by the Victoria State Government, a more appropriate outcome.

The fact that the Commonwealth Government did not enact any of the dispute resolution clauses within any of the Victorian RFA 's indicates an acceptance by the Commonwealth Government to the 'changes' that have occurred.<sup>25</sup>

The Commonwealth Government needs to acknowledge there is a lack of confidence in at least half of the RFAs across Australia and that Victoria is only using the Victorian RFAs as management tools.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry web page regarding the West RFA implies logging is still occurring in the Otways (and in Western Victoria for that matter).<sup>26</sup>

In contrast, the webpage about the South East Queensland RFA acknowledges that the RFA process was never completed.<sup>27</sup>

The interpretation of the RFAs that the Commonwealth Government is providing to the public is false and misleading. The Commonwealth Government is denying that that the Victorian State government's actual management of public forest is in total conflict with the RFAs.

This is despite the fact that in 2002 the Forest Minister Ian Macdonald publicly acknowledged the Victorian RFA processes in Victoria was going off the rails.

I'm calling for urgent talks with the Victorian Government so that the full impact of the Victorian government's decision can be explained to the Commonwealth and so that the Commonwealth can clearly investigate whether Victoria has breached the Regional Forest Agreements.<sup>28</sup>

However Macdonald never followed up with action on the Commonwealth dispute resolution clause (for example sections 9-14 of the both the West or Central Highlands RFAs).

When it became inevitable that the West RFA was to be cancelled the Federal forestry minister's response was:

Ladies and gentlemen, by contrast the Commonwealth Government does remain committed to the 5 Victorian Regional Forest Agreements. Our Government enacted the RFA legislation .... in May this year. While the passage of the Commonwealth RFA has removed any sovereign risk by a future Commonwealth Government, the inescapable reality of course is that State Governments do bear the Constitutional responsibility for forest management.

That's why I call upon the next Government of Victoria, which ever it is, to introduce complementary RFA legislation to provide legislative backing to Victoria' RFAs. And whilst I agree that an agreement signed by the Victorian Premier and the Prime Minister should not need legislative backing obviously history has shown

that is absolutely essential and as I say it is essential that we have that legislative backing in Victoria to lock in once and for all the security to forest industries and regional communities and for conservation interests that the RFAs were certainly intended to provide.<sup>29</sup>

Within the West RFA it states:

Termination: Section 98 This Agreement may only be terminated by the Commonwealth:...

b) on a fundamental failure by the State to comply with the spirit of the Agreement after the observance of the dispute resolution procedures in clauses 10 to 14.

Clearly the Commonwealth had a serious issue with the 'spirit' for which the Victorian government was handling the RFAs. However for political reasons the Commonwealth has chosen to not terminate or push for amendments to the Victorian RFAs. Instead the native forest logging industry and the former coalition Federal Government have sought to maintain a façade that the RFA process is effective in Victoria and across Australia.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Victorian State Government should make the Commonwealth government acknowledge the failure of the RFAs in Victoria which account for half of all signed RFAs in Australia.

## **5 RFA failed to address water vs wood issues.**

From the start, the RFA process was established on the false assumption that impact of logging on water values was not a serious issue. Therefore, absurdly, communities affected by catchment management were not included in formal RFA consultation processes.

Failure to adequately deal with the impact of logging on water values has significantly contributed to destabilisation of the RFA process in Victoria.

This destabilisation has affected the whole feedback system (five year reviews etc) between the Commonwealth and State governments.

The National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS 1995 edition) sets out the terms of reference for the RFA process. Within Section 4.6 it states:

Water supply and catchment management The value to the community of a reliable, high-quality water supply is very great and the States will appropriately consider water availability and quality in deciding land use allocations or management

The NFPS provides a definition of the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) process. In Section 4.3 it states:

The Governments have identified a single, comprehensive regional assessment process.

This implies a 'one size fits all' assessment to each CRA for each RFA. Of the many issues the CRA was to investigate, the issue of logging in water supply catchments was not raised.

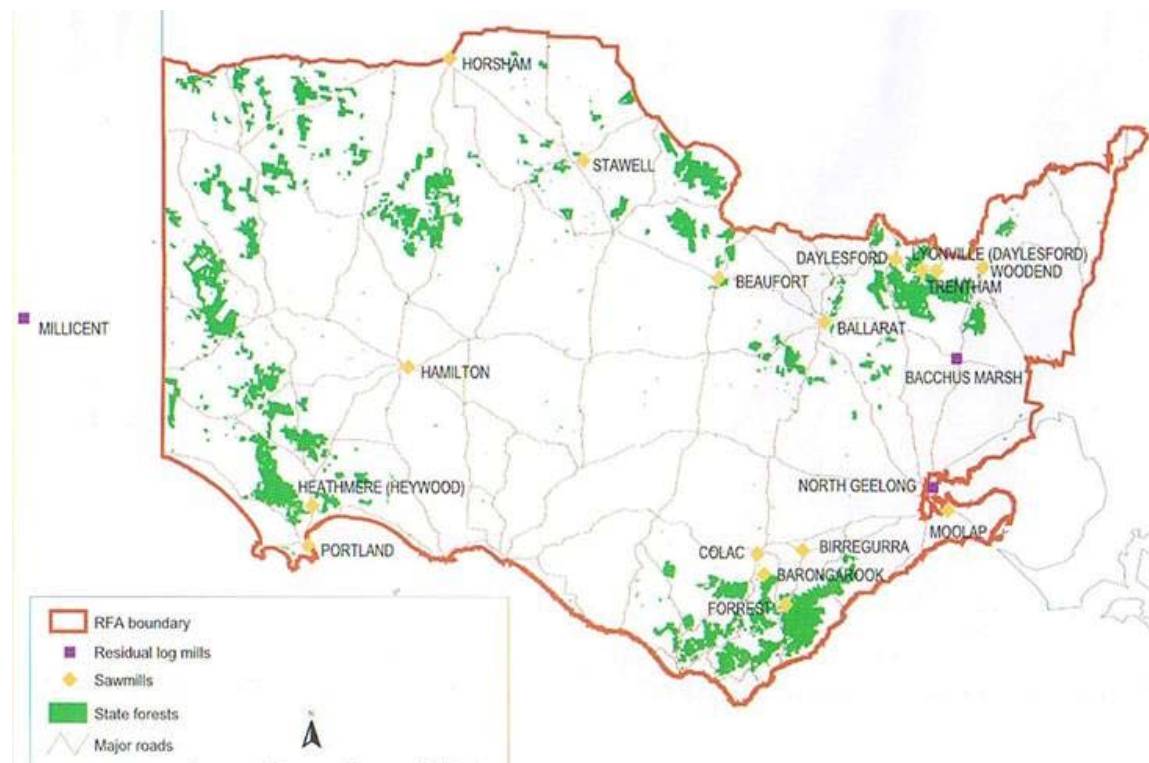
To deal with the need to vary a CRA process the following solution was provided.

When it is agreed that existing information for a particular region is insufficient for the purpose, regional surveys will be undertaken to obtain the required additional data on a case-by-case basis.

But the fact remains, when the Regional Forest Agreements (RFA) were conducted across Victoria, urban water users were not formally included in the consultation process.

### 5.1 Case Study: West RFA tried to exclude water users

The maps below show how Geelong City was excluded from the West RFA study area despite the Midway export woodchip mill being within the Geelong metropolitan area, and Geelong relying on 70% of its water supply from forested catchments in the Otways.



Close inspection of the RFA boundaries makes it clear that the Geelong metro area was excluded from the formal consultation process.



The original RFA process did not regard urban water users as stakeholders and excluded them from the RFA study area. This occurred despite water supply catchments in the Otways being directly and significantly affected by the resulting 20 year logging agreement.

Local government and the community were outraged over the lack of consideration of water issues within the West RFA process. OREN, Geelong Community Forum and other local community groups worked to ensure the community was made aware of the issue.<sup>30</sup>

The community demanded that the impact of logging on water supplies be considered as a part of the West RFA process, and argued Geelong residents should be consulted. As a result, when the West RFA was signed, it was the only agreement that included a requirement to conduct hydrology research written into clause 61 of the West RFA.

Parties agree that the provision of adequate flows of high quality surface water and maintenance of groundwater processes is a fundamental goal of forest management and note that a range of measures (see Attachment 9) have been implemented through the Victorian Forest Management System to address the issues associated with water supply, water quality and groundwater processes in forests. As part of the Forest Management System, Victoria proposes to conduct hydrological research on the impacts of timber harvesting on water quality and yield. Victoria will develop a project brief for this research which will include the Otway Ranges, in consultation with industry and community stakeholders, by 30 June 2000.<sup>31</sup>

The inclusion of Section 61 under the heading of 'Water' demonstrates that a 'CRA' in the literal true sense had not occurred. A major outstanding contentious issue, the impact of logging in water supply catchments, still remained unresolved at the time of signing of the West RFA.

After the West RFA was signed, consultants SKM were selected by a community reference group to do an assessment of the impact of logging on Otways water supply catchments.

The results of the SKM study were released in 2001 and confirmed that logging was having a significant impact on Geelong's water supply. The community believed this impact was not acceptable.<sup>32</sup>

This conflict over the West RFA process contributed to the unwillingness of the Victorian State government to create legislation to 'lock in' the five Victorian RFAs.<sup>33</sup>

When then Premier Bracks justified canceling the West RFA, local government opposition to logging was used as a justification. The local Government opposition to logging was expressed in council resolutions and submissions to the RFA process calling for logging to be ended in water supply catchments.<sup>34</sup>

#### **Recommendation 4**

Acknowledge that failure of the West RFA process to address water issues before the RFA was signed significantly contributed to major changes occurring to the West RFA after it was signed; these changes occurred as a consequence of policy announcement during the November 2002 State election.



### **5.2 Case Study: Central Highlands RFA and Melbourne's water supply.**

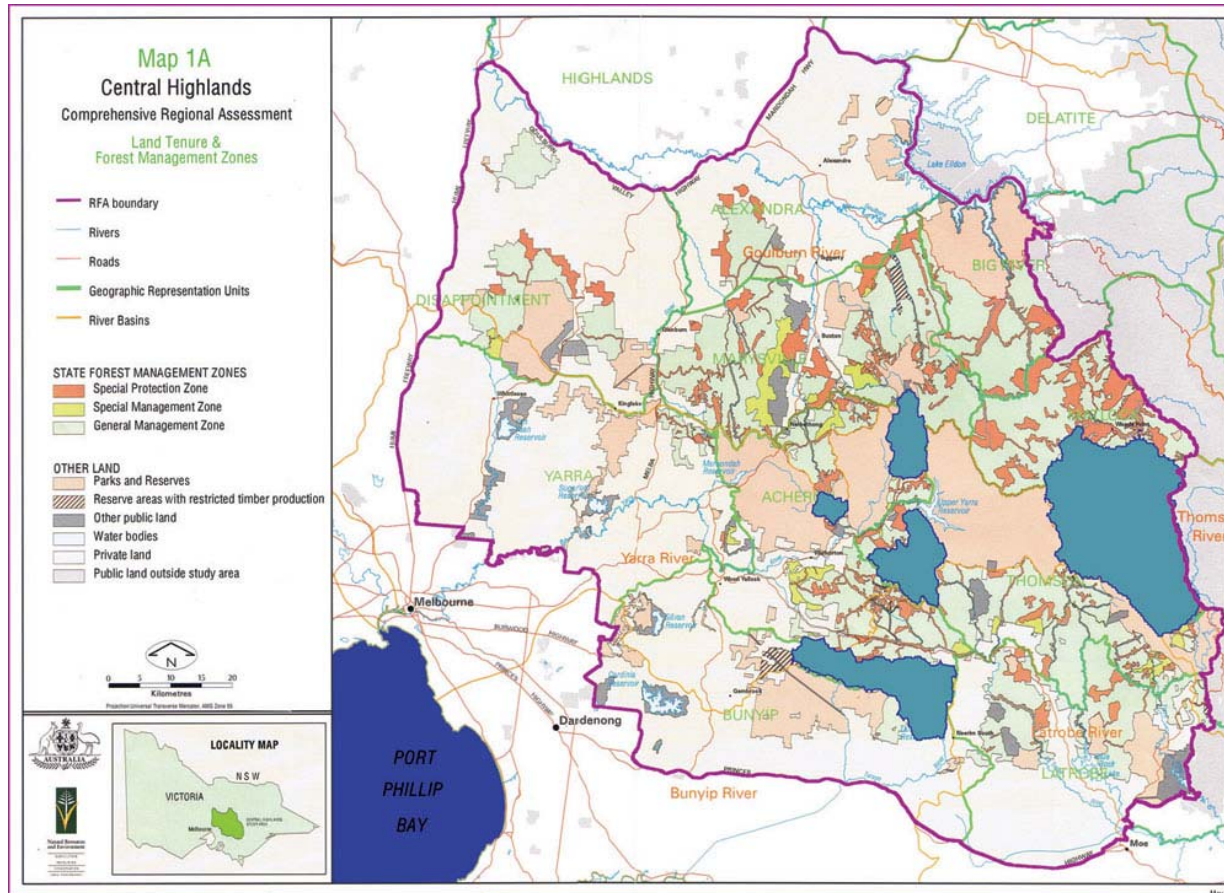
As acknowledged on page 58 of the Draft RFA Review, there are still unresolved issues surrounding clause 81 of the Central Highlands RFA relating to the logging in Melbourne's forested water supply catchments.

This demonstrates that the Central Highlands RFA (CHRFA) process like the West RFA process also failed to consider the long running conflict over logging in domestic water supplies.

The inclusion of logging impact of water was not debated and addressed for the CHRFA, despite this being the key water catchments for Melbourne. A contributing factor for this lack of debate was the boycott of the Central Highlands RFA process by state and national environment groups.<sup>35</sup>

All of Melbourne four million residents are stakeholders in issues surrounding land management of the Melbourne's water supply catchments covered by the Central Highlands RFA (CH RFA). However the RFA process did not acknowledge this. The CHRFA study area boundary shown in the map below shows metro Melbourne formally excluded. (Similar to the West RFA for Geelong as discussed above).

The Central Highlands RFA process assumed Melbourne residents were not directly affected by logging on public land in their water supply catchments. Hence only communities located inside the purple line shown on the official RFA map were formally consulted. (The blue areas show Melbourne's domestic water catchments where logging is permitted; we have superimposed these on to the map.)



The Central Highlands RFA was signed based on the following simplistic and now totally disproved conclusions:

The next augmentation of Melbourne's water supply is not due until well beyond 2020. Given the reduction in water demand over the last few years and the limitations on timber harvesting in the catchment, it is likely that the next augmentation will be delayed by several years. On this basis the benefits of harvesting both water and timber from this catchment can be achieved.<sup>36</sup>

Based on this false assumption, the economic value of water for Melbourne was given the same generic importance as beekeeping or firewood collection during the Central Highlands RFA assessment.<sup>37</sup>

Less than ten years after the CHRFA was signed, water augmentation has become a huge political issue for Melbourne and Victoria; augmentation projects such as desalination and North-South pipeline are now highly controversial. Unlike the West RFA, the CHRFA has no requirements to examine the impact of logging on Melbourne's water supply.

Independent State Government inquiries have all contradicted the CH CRA by calling on a logging to be halted in the Melbourne catchments, as shown below.

### A. Water Smart: Recommendation 15: October 2002.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

The Committee recommends that:

- Melbourne Water, within two years, undertakes hydrological studies and releases a report, on the impact of logging on water yield in the Yarra tributaries and Tarago Reservoir catchments and the Government investigates the economic, social and environmental benefits and costs of establishing plantations to allow the phasing out of logging in these catchments.
- The Government, within two years, undertakes a detailed investigation and releases a report, of the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of establishing plantations to allow the phasing out of logging in the Thomson Reservoir catchments.
- The existing agreements between the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and Melbourne Water concerning logging rates in the catchments are not renegotiated until the above investigations are completed.

### B. Infrastructure Planning Council: Recommendation 18: October 2002

The IPC recommends that the Government take action to protect and improve the long-term health of Victoria's catchments and water quality by:

- retaining Melbourne's closed water catchments;
- phasing out logging in catchments where ever possible by 2020

### C. Commissioner Environmental Sustainability: Victoria State of the Environment Report: Recommendation WR1. 2008.

The Victorian Government should assess the merit of removing logging from Melbourne's water supply catchments, to maximise catchment yield and water quality.<sup>38</sup>

### D. Water White Paper and Water vs Wood study (2004-2008)

The fact the water issues were not address in CH RFA process is highlighted by policy announcements in the Victorian State Government's Water White Paper released in June 2004. Action 2.21 required research to be conducted and options explored.<sup>39</sup>

In response to the Water White Paper, consultancy URS was commissioned to conduct a Wood Vs Water project on behalf of the State Government. It has taken four years to release the final report despite a similar Otway study only taking one year. It is suspected that the reason for this delay is political stalling on behalf of the logging industry. The State government, on behalf of the logging industry has its own spin on the results – as shown in fact-sheets on the Our Water website.<sup>40</sup>

However results confirm that a logging ban in the Melbourne catchments is the best option from a water users' point of view.

Ending logging by 2009/2010 was the best option<sup>41</sup>

**Public opposition to catchment logging**

In 2008 there were 15 councils, representing 2 million people, who passed resolutions calling on the State government to ban logging in Melbourne's water supply catchments.<sup>42</sup>

During the 2002 election and after the policy to ban logging in the Otways was announced, there was a logging industry backlash campaign as there was concern that the Otway logging ban would set a precedent to ban logging in the Melbourne water supply catchments.<sup>43</sup>

The logging industry accepts continued logging in Melbourne's water supply catchments to be at serious risk of being halted due to the competition between water and wood values.<sup>44</sup>

**Recommendation 5**

Acknowledge that the result of failure to investigate key issues, such as the importance of forest for water supply, during Central Highlands RFA processes means that major changes such as a logging ban within the Melbourne catchments still need to be resolved.

## 6 Quality of Original Agreements

The failure of the RFAs is partly due to the decision by peak conservation groups to boycott the RFA process, from the beginning, due to their high expectations.

In the 1980's most forest campaigns and the main peak conservation groups were not focused on compromise strategies where the highest priority forest areas were sought for permanent conservation. Such a strategy had previously successfully protected many forest areas throughout Australia.

However in the late 1980's and very early 1990's some state and national conservation groups created a culture within the broader environment movement where a total ban on all native forest logging became the goal.

By this time it was well recognised by all parties in the logging debate that native forest logging operations on public land in Western Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Southern NSW had evolved to a point that they were not economically viable without the development of an export woodchips industry.

Past over-logging to meet the demand for post WWII housing boom had made many areas of native forest no longer economic to log for saw-logs alone. Additionally an expanding softwood plantation industry had significantly taken over the markets for building and construction materials for which native forest timbers had once dominated. The development of the export woodchip market was largely supported by State forestry bureaucracies as a way to enable native forest logging to remain economically viable.<sup>45</sup>

Woodchipping entrenches the practice of clearfell logging in native forests. Peak environment groups took the view that all native forest logging needed to end in areas that had become economically depended on the export woodchip industry. This was a practically attractive proposition for environment groups trying to stop logging in the high conservation forests in East Gippsland and Tasmania.

The power to issue export woodchip licenses rested with the Federal Government.

To this end the peak conservation groups with critical support from thousands of forest activists, partially in East Gippsland (1993-1995 forest protests) successfully made the forest issue a federal government issue in the lead up to the 1996 Federal Government election.

However for these environment groups, the idea of compromise which Keating proposed under National Forest Policy Statement and Regional Forest Agreement policies was not acceptable. On one level Keating's original RFA policy announcement was similar to the role the Victorian Land Conservation Council (LCC) played when assessing land use in Victoria. Like the LCC process, the RFA would be conducted at a National level where compromise between logging and conservatism was the goal.

However peak environment groups including Environment Victoria took the view that enough compromises had already occurred with the LCC process and now the final solution was needed<sup>46</sup> Victorian Conservation Groups such as Environment Victoria and Australian Conservation Foundation teamed up with the Wilderness Society (TWS). TWS being a national environment organization took the lead with a very hard line against logging.

In the lead up to the 1996 Federal election TWS actively attacked the Keating Federal Government for not banning export woodchipping in native forest. Such a ban would have effectively created a no native forest logging outcome in areas that had come to depend of the export woodchip market to make logging operations economically viable. Keating came

under pressure from logging communities where there were limited alternative employment prospects. The loggers blockade of Canberra in early 1995 demonstrated the political clout the native forest logging industry could muster. Keating refused to shut down sections of the logging industry though an export woodchip ban.

Despite this, the Wilderness Society decided to strategically pressure Keating (with endorsement of Environment Victoria and Australian Conservation Foundation) and effectively boycotted any compromise process that Keating proposed (such as the RFA process) even before the RFA process began.<sup>47</sup>

Instead they Wilderness Society tried to blackmail the Keating Government with total electoral annihilation by showing unqualified political support for the election of a Coalition Government in the 14 months lead up to the 1996 federal election.<sup>48</sup>

The TWS strategy failed as Keating would not yield. Instead TWS significantly contributed towards the election of the Howard Government in 1996. Howard was to remained Prime minister for 11 years.

The Howard Government in power together with a conservative Victorian State Government began to make many concessions to the woodchipping industry from 1996 onwards. Environment groups used the State and Federal conservative governments' support for the native forest logging industries as justification to continue a boycott of most of the Victorian RFA processes and hence had limited input.<sup>49</sup> For example see press release from 1997 where many peak conservation groups announced boycotting the CH RFA.<sup>50</sup>

The fact peak environment groups boycotted the RFA process played into the hands of the native forest logging industry. Without peak environment group input, logging industry groups were able to shape the RFA terms of reference making the whole process even more weighted towards their own self interest. Logging industry groups then actively participated and supported the RFA process, largely unchallenged, in order to 'lock in' 20 year wood supply agreements at State and Federal levels. For this reason logging industry groups today continue to support the RFA process. In general most conservation group input into the Victorian RFA process was from small regional groups where significant conservation outcomes occurred.

- East Gippsland RFA 1993 - 1997 -Concerned Resident of East Gippsland participation and was instrumental in achieving the Ellery catchment old growth forests being added to the Errinundra National Park.
- North East RFA 1996 -1999 - Wilderness Society and other community groups worked get the Wongungarra catchment added to the Alpine National Park.<sup>51</sup>
- West RFA 1998-2002 – Coalition of local environmental groups (OREN, GCF,GEC, Portland Field Naturalists and Wombat Forest Society) worked with the West RFA process that ultimately resulted in new National Parks and a logging ban for the Otways and Portland areas.

It should be noted that the only time that the Wilderness Society did participate in any meaningful way in a Victorian RFA, their contribution resulted in a small but significant conservation outcome (the Wongungarra Wilderness).

Nevertheless despite these conservation outcomes there continues to be, understandably, widespread community disaffection with the Victorian RFAs which are a result of politics and failed peak environment group actions. In particular the unresolved issue of logging in

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

Melbourne's Water supply catchments is an obvious example for the Central Highlands RFA, where most conservation groups boycotted that RFA process.

However where there was strong community participation in the West RFA, the broader community's expectations were ultimately met through logging bans and new National Parks. These meant the RFA process was ultimately made accountable via the democratic election process.

**Recommendation 6**

Accept that the ultimate RFA outcomes were biased towards logging, particularly where peak conservation groups did not make a large effort to participate in the process.

## 7 Definition of 'small change' to an RFA.

A major unresolved issue identified in the draft RFA review document is the ongoing issue of logging in the Melbourne water supply catchments, as acknowledged on page 59 of draft RFA review.

(Note Central Highlands RFA clause 81 is listed under section 5.14 titled "Other Forest Uses" when it is clearly an issues relevant is water values. This clause should be listed under section 5.9. titled "Water".)

It has been made clear that this RFA review process can make minor changes to any or all of the Victorian RFAs.

Obligation While the review process will not open up the Agreement to renegotiation, both parties may agree to some minor modifications to incorporate the results of the review.

The relevant clause numbers in the RFAs are:

EG - 31  
CH - 37  
NE - 37  
W - 38  
G - 38<sup>52</sup>

It is acknowledged by the review<sup>53</sup> that the both the Commonwealth and State governments may agree to minor changes under the review.

If it was decided by the State Government to ban logging in the Melbourne catchments, then it follows that such a decision to stop logging in the associated 70,000 ha of State forest must be regarded as only a minor change to the Central Highland RFA. The way the Victorian RFA review process has been structured leads to this conclusion.

The Draft RFA review<sup>54</sup> references former Premier Steve Bracks' speech to the Victorian Parliament on the 5 October 2004 about changes to the west RFA. What was specifically said in Parliament was that the West RFA was cancelled:

Mr BRACKS (Premier) -- We took action to cancel one of our regional forest agreements here in Victoria, which I committed to at the last election when I committed to creating a new national park in the Otway Ranges."

In relation to the regional forest agreements, we cancelled the agreement associated with the Otway National Park, and we are proceeding with the national park through a reference to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Committee.<sup>55</sup>

As discussed in section 5.1 of this submission Clause 61 of the West RFA was a critical unresolved issue when the West RFA was signed. Ultimately the unresolved issues lead to the West RFAs being, "cancelled", as former Premier Bracks put it.

The word "cancelled" has not been printed anywhere within the draft RFA review document. It is clear that the fact the clauses within the West RFA has been included in the draft RFA review document for analysis means the current State and Commonwealth Governments views the legislations that has legally stop logging in areas covered by Victorian RFAs (since they were signed) as no more than "changes" or "minor changes" for that matter.



Hence the magnitude to the legislated land use changes since the Victorian RFAs were signed can be assumed to be a benchmark to determine what constitutes a “minor change” to a Victorian RFA by both the Victorian and Federal Governments.

The following gives an idea of the legislated land use changes since the Victorian RFAs were signed include:

- Otways – 90,000 ha
- Cobboboonnee – 27,000 ha
- East Gippsland – 45,000 ha

Additionally the new the Baw Baw Frog SPZ informal reserve was created within the area covered in the Central Gippsland RFA but this has only taken a relatively small 5000ha away from logging.<sup>56</sup>

For example the Federal Government took no action under Clauses 9-14 of the West RFA to seek dispute resolution against the Victorian State Government decision to “Cancel” West RFA despite the public anger expressed by Ministers of the former Howard Government. This indicates an acceptance by the Federal Government to the magnitude of the land changes made after the Victorian RFAs were signed.

#### **Recommendation 7**

If the State Government were to rezone 70,000 ha of State forest as a water catchment area where logging is totally excluded then that must be regarded as a minor change to the Central Highlands RFA in order to be consistent with the approach the State and Federal Governments are taking to the current Victorian RFA review process.

Note: Of the 70,000 ha State forests only 20,000 ha of this is high water yielding ash forests available for logging. About 5,000 ha of this ash forest has been severely burnt by Black Saturday fires and has been salvaged logged. The burnt out area available for logging will not be of strategic importance for the remaining terms of the Central Highlands RFA. About 2000 ha has also been made part of the Baw Baw Frog protection SPZ.

## 8 SPZ swaps

Timber industry groups often interpret the following obligation to mean that if one area of forest is protected then a Special Protection Zone (SPZ) needs to be swapped in its place so there is not nett loss of timber production capacity.

Obligation Parties agree that any changes to the area of State forest will not lead to a net deterioration in the timber production capacity of those areas available for harvesting in terms of volume, species and quality.

Clause numbers

CH - 68

NE - 67

W - 69

G - 69<sup>57</sup>

The issue of opening up SPZs for logging has recently been raised in connection with the legislation to protect 45,000 ha of forests in East Gippsland.<sup>58</sup> However the above obligation is contained in all the RFAs except the East Gippsland RFA. Hence the discussion on East Gippsland<sup>59</sup> is not relevant to the RFA review process.

In general terms what is regarded as timber production capacity cannot be assumed to be just based on area available. For example since the Victorian RFAs were signed, the Our Forests Our Future process cut logging rates by 30% across Victoria with no new reserves created or SPZ unlocked to increases timber production capacity.

It is critically important to note that there is no clear definition of what constitutes a sawlog driven logging industry in the 2009 Timber Industry Strategy for Victoria.

The amount of wood that could potentially be a sawlog or woodchip log is unclear. However an analysis of VicForests' own data shows the industry is currently woodchip driven and in breach of the intent of National Forest Policy Statement (1995) for the "long term stability of forests and forest industries."

VicForests' own data shows about 70% of trees cut down are woodchipped and woodchips represent 60% of the total revenues for VicForests.<sup>60</sup>

Better sawlog recovers from logs sent of as woodchips would increase regional sawn timber output. For example research by the CSIRO research in 1989-92 found that a further 14-20% sawlog recovery could be obtained from logs that are graded for woodchips.<sup>61</sup> Potentially 50% of logs graded as woodchips have some sawlog potential. Hence technologically restructuring of the native forest logging industry can increase sawlog output without opening up any new areas to logging.<sup>62</sup> The technology for the utilisation of small diameter logs already exists in northern NSW where no domestic or export woodchip industries have been established.<sup>63</sup>

The East Gippsland RFA clause 53 states that new technology and value adding are a priority. It is Victorian State Government policy as of the 2006 State election to develop a small log line in East Gippsland to obtain sawn timber recovery from logs that are otherwise being exported as woodchips. If successful this investment would significantly increase the sawlog output from East Gippsland without any additional areas being given up for logging.

**Recommendation 8**

SPZs can remain off-limits to logging as so much potential sawn-timber is being sold off as woodchips. Conservation groups are totally opposed to SPZ being regarded as potential new sources of woodchip logs given there is no definition of what defines a sawlog driven industry.

The East Gippsland RFA is technically excluded from this discussion of maintaining timber production capacity if area available for logging is changed.

## 9 Implications of wildfire risk to the RFAs

The public's awareness of the risk and danger of bushfires was heightened following the Black Saturday wildfires last year. Scientific research and observations following the Black Saturday fires are making it increasingly clear that logging heightens the risk of wildfires. This has been acknowledged by experts giving evidence to the Royal Commission.

Additionally logging affects the ability of rainforest to act as a natural firebreak to moderate fires.

OREN and MWCN have written extensive submissions to the Royal Commission on these topics. These submissions are available at:

[http://www.oren.org.au/issues/fire/Submissions\\_May\\_2009\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.oren.org.au/issues/fire/Submissions_May_2009_FINAL.pdf) (May 2009) and  
[http://www.oren.org.au/issues/fire/Submissions-2\\_Feb\\_2010.pdf](http://www.oren.org.au/issues/fire/Submissions-2_Feb_2010.pdf) (February 2010)

The RFAs include the following obligation:

Obligation Parties agree to consult each other in the development of further research projects that may affect the Agreement and note that the subject areas and priorities may change through the duration of the Agreement.

Clause numbers

EG – 63

CH – 84

NE – 82

W – 90

G – 90<sup>64</sup>

### Recommendation 9

Given the increasing scientific evidence that native forest logging increases wildfire risk, the RFAs should be revised to acknowledge this increase in risk and management changed to decrease the risk of wildfire due to logging.

### Recommendation 10

Given logging affects rainforests' ability to act as a natural firebreak, the RFAs should be revised to ensure logging practices are not allowed close to rainforest.

## Appendix I

### **Otways/OREN campaign destroyed the West Regional Forest Agreement process.**

Extract from: <http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/westrfadead.htm>



## Otways/OREN campaign destroyed the Regional Forest Agreement process.

### Former Premier Steve Bracks cancelled West Regional Forest Agreement.

On the 5th of October 2004 the former Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks acknowledged in State Parliament what most in the Otway forest debate already knew.

That is, the West Regional Forest Agreement or [West RFA](#), was cancelled when Mr Bracks announced [new Otway policies](#) at Triplet falls in the Otways on the 6th November 2002.

"Mr BRACKS (Premier) -- We took action to cancel one of our regional forest agreements here in Victoria, which I committed to at the last election when I committed to creating a new national park in the Otway Ranges."

[Victorian Parliament Hansard, 5 October 2004, Page 594 \(see full Hansard transcript below\)](#)

**Former Premier Bracks is the only State Premier to ever have cancelled a Regional Forest Agreement in its entirety anywhere in Australia!!**

This very significant acknowledgment put a halt to the native forest woodchip industries strategy to obtain Victorian State legislated 'resource security' through the Regional Forest Agreement process.



Former Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks. (1999-2007)

### The demise of the West Regional Forest Agreement.

1. [The RFA process.](#)
2. [West RFA process was destroyed by broad community participation.](#)
3. [After the West RFA was signed and before it was cancelled](#)
  - 3.1 Water issues undermined West RFA credibility.
  - 3.2 The community rejected the RFA after it was signed.
  - 3.3 Native forest woodchip industry failed to get RFA's legislated
  - 3.4 VAFI 2002 pre-election campaign acknowledges RFA's under threat.
  - 3.5 OREN challenges VAFI
4. [The 2002 Victorian State election](#)
  - 4.1 RFA support split major parties during 2002 Victorian State election.
  - 4.2 Liberals were electorally punished for their RFA support.
  - 4.3 Logging industry advertised Regional Forest Agreement demise.
  - 4.4 Logging industry anti Otway election campaign(2002) focused on Morwell, not Geelong.
5. [OREN / Otways campaign a "Watershed". Loggers pay tribute to OREN.](#)

#### 1. The RFA process.

The Regional Forest Agreements (or disagreement) (RFA) was a process that was meant to provide the final solution to the forest debate in Australia. The process was imposed on the community by both the State and Federal Governments over a five year period.

The RFA's are strongly supported by the forestry bureaucracies, native forest logging industry and forest unions in all States. These industry groups wanted the RFA's to provide long term legislated 'resource security'. This 'resource security' was to legally lock in guaranteed volumes of woodchips and sawlogs for at least 20 years from public native forests across Australia. Logging interests also wanted the legislation to stop more public forested land being made unavailable for clearfell logging due to ongoing community opposition and lobbying.

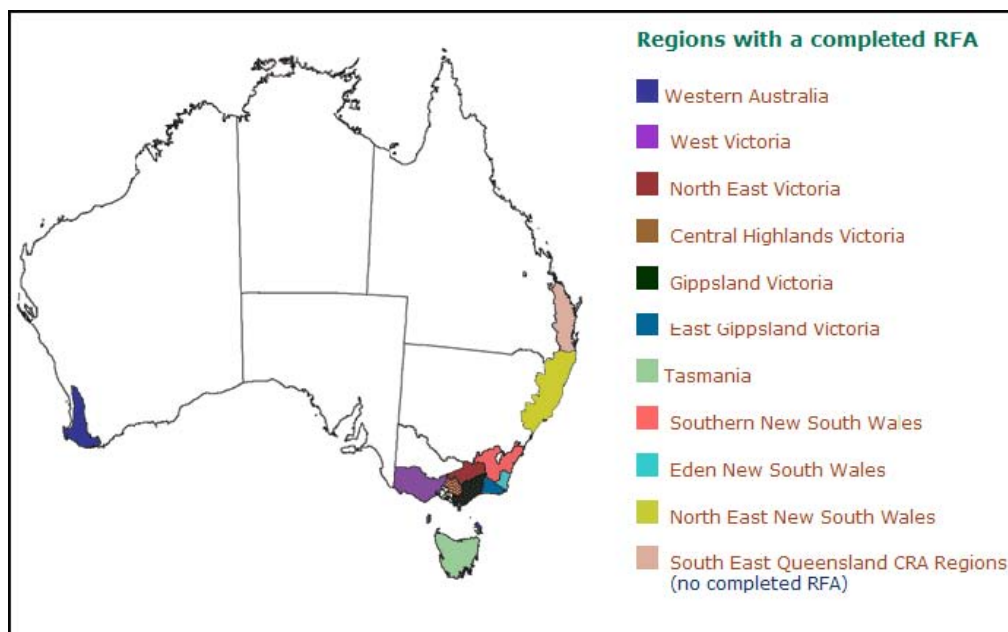
See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).



Regional Forest Agreements are all about clearfell logging for woodchips. Above is forest clearfell logged in Geelong's domestic water supply catchment after the West Regional Forest Agreement was signed.

The bonus for the Commonwealth Government involvement in the [RFA](#) process was to free Federal politicians from the troublesome problem of setting export native forest woodchip licences each year, a process which in the 1990's always created a lot of controversy during an election year.

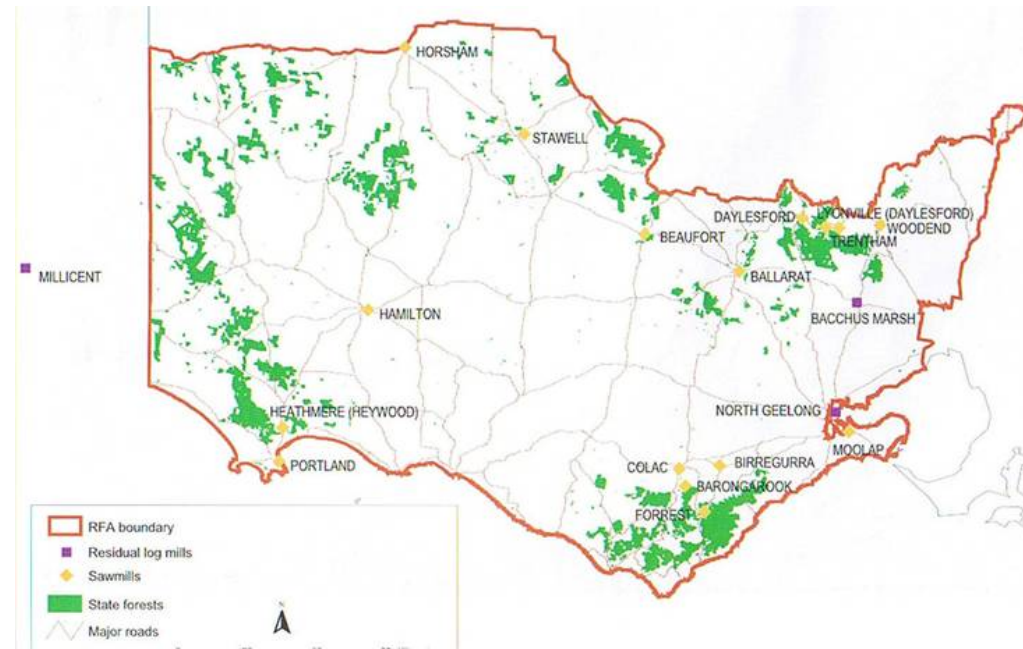
In Australia there were meant to be eleven RFA's located in Victoria (5), NSW (4), Qld(1 never completed), WA(1) and Tasmania(1).



This map is sourced from [Commonwealth DAFF website](#). (Note :DAFF still does not recognise the that West RFA is cancelled.)

The West RFA which includes the Otway forests, was one of the last ones completed and signed by both the Federal and State governments on the 31st of March 2000. The West RFA included other forest areas near Portland and Daylesford.

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).



Official RFA map showing boundary. Note "Residual log mill" in North Geelong is [Midways](#), and is not in the study area despite being the biggest recipient of native forest trees from the West RFA study area at the time.

The final part of the RFA process was for both the State and Federal governments to provide complementary RFA legislation to give them legal standing. The Federal Government did this but the Victorian State Government has not. Hence the five Victorian RFA's out of a total of ten completed Australia wide (half the total) have not been legislated at a State level as required by the RFA process. The State Governments that have provided complementary legislation are only in Tasmania, NSW. Huge community opposition to clearfell logging old growth forests in Western Australia in 1999 resulted in that RFA being amended and then ignored by the WA State Government.

## 2. West RFA process was destroyed by broad community participation.

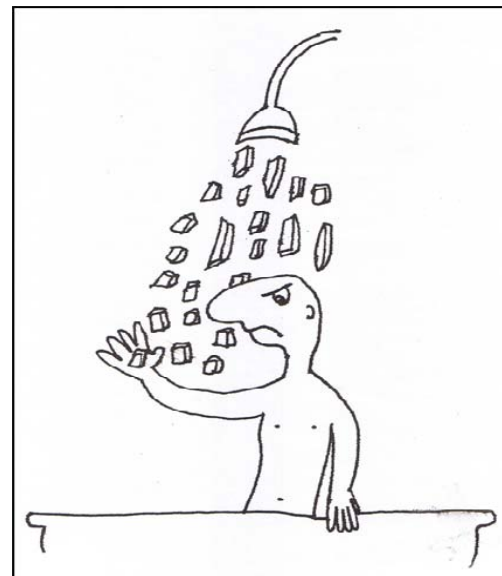
The fact that the community stood up for their water supply by participating in the West RFA process was one of the key reasons the West RFA was later torn up by the Victorian State government only a few years after it was signed.

Every conservationist knew the RFA terms of reference were fundamentally flawed. The process prioritised continued logging over all other non-timber forest values. By the time the West RFA started, three RFA had already been signed in Victoria. In general, peak conservation groups had boycotted these RFA processes in protest against the fact the RFA's had a strong bias towards logging. This boycott effectively gave the native forest logging industry a free arm to lobby the State and Federal governments to get most of what they wanted.

However during the West RFA, OREN and other regional conservation groups participated in the process and encouraged other community groups to do the same. Their strategy was to focus on non-timber forest values such as tourism, water and nature conservation and to use the West RFA process as a tool to promote these values throughout the community.

Within the Geelong community, OREN worked with the Geelong Community Forum (GCF) and Geelong Environment Council to expose the fact that the urban community of Geelong was being locked out of the West RFA process. This was despite the Geelong water supply catchments being directly affected by a RFA agreement locking in 20 years of continuous logging.

Campaigning under the banner of "Our Water, Our Forests, Our Future" the GCF ran several large public forums in the Geelong West Town Hall ([See example](#)), encouraged letter writing to the local newspapers, held a submission writing workshop, organised local protests, coordinated a petition to the State Parliament, lobbied the City of Greater Geelong and Barwon Water, and attended meetings with forestry bureaucrats and the Environment Minister



Geelong resident trying to have a shower with woodchips rather than water from Otways. Source GCF publication.

The Otway logging / RFA issue become a political and personal



See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

issue for the 300,000 people in the Geelong region who rely on water from forested areas being clearfelled the logged in the Otway water supply catchments.

The West RFA included State forest areas near Portland and Daylesford. During the West RFA process, OREN and GCF worked with other regional conservation groups including the Wombat Forest Society and Portland Field Naturalists and together set up a joint group called West Victorian Forest Protection Network (WVFPN), partly funded by a grant from the Commonwealth government. The WVFPN provided regional support to produce submissions, public meetings, track the RFA process and rally community opposition to the West RFA process across Western Victoria.

In response to growing community concern, Environment Minister Garbutt set up a *West Victorian Independent Panel* to review all RFA public submissions. A public presentation process occurred between 17 January and 3 March 2000, with a report made publicly available days after the West RFA was signed. The *West Victorian Independent Panel* recorded the fact there was significant public opposition to logging in the Otways before the West RFA was signed. (See [report and extracts](#)).

<p>A positive outcome from the West RFA was the maximum annual rates of logging for sawlogs in the Otways was reduced from 44,000 cubic metres to 27,000 cubic meters. This logging rate reduction had the effect of reducing the number of logging crews working over summer in the Otways from eight to five. This took some pressure off the rate of forest destruction.</p> <p>However the native forest logging industry rather than accepting that the cutbacks were a result of the forestry bureaucracy and past State governments incompetently allowing over logging to occur, instead wanted to forgive the forestry bureaucracy and allow high levels of logging to continue by compromising environmental values.</p> <p>Some loggers and irresponsible federal politicians wanted environmental laws relaxed so the landscape intensity of logging could be increased to compensate for the past failures of forestry bureaucracies.</p> <p>The forestry union officials selfishly argued that the forestry bureaucracy errors could be overlooked by protecting less forests so clearfelled logging rates could stay the same.</p>	<p><b>Logging plan a threat to reserves</b> <b>By CLAIRE MILLER, Environmental Reporter</b> <b>2nd March 2000.</b></p> <p>The timber industry in western Victoria is pushing for logging along side streams and for fewer conservation reserves in a desperate bid to lift the amount of timber felled in native forests.</p> <p>The idea was put to the federal Forestry and Conservation Minister, Mr Wilson Tuckey, at talks with about 40 sawmill owners and logging contractors in Ballarat this weekend.</p> <p>The industry has been thrown into turmoil by massive cuts in timber volumes revealed in the proposed Commonwealth-state regional forest agreements for western Victoria and Gippsland. Some of the reduction is due to proposed reserves, but most is due to the state agency, Forestry Victoria, admitting there is less timber than it had led the industry to believe. The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union's forestry division has already warned that it will not accept new reserves at the expense of jobs.</p> <p>The Victorian Association of Forest Industries is evaluating long term options such as reforestation and plantations, but the sawmillers and loggers told Mr Tuckey that desperate times required desperate measures if jobs and businesses were to be saved.</p> <p>They called for conservation and habitat reserves to be deferred; for the code of forest practice to be relaxed to allow logging in stream buffer zones; for fertilisers and intensive thinning to accelerate growth rates; and for the 10 per cent margin for error or natural disaster to be dropped.</p> <p>Mr Tuckey's suggestions included subsidising supplementary timber from other regions in the short-term, and reducing waste by sawmills taking whole logs rather than cutting them up in the forest and accepting only the best sections.</p> <p>Mr Graeme Harding, the owner of the Maxwell and Olsen Sawmill at Daylesford and a sustainable forestry advocate, said the industry did not want to know about creative solutions. "They want to keep going the way they are," he said.</p>
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Further public opposition to the RFA was expressed on Saturday 4th March 2000 during a rally against the West RFA in Geelong at the Midway export woodchip mill. This rally was attended by hundreds of people who lived throughout Western Victoria.

On the eve of the RFA being signed, it was clear that the conflict over logging in the Otways was far from over. The RFA process had totally failed in its objective to resolve contentious forest the issues and provide woodchip resource security.

The media reported the federal and state bureaucracy that had overseen the RFA process was responsible for its failure by not providing an honest and transparent consultation process for the whole community. An article in the Geelong Advertiser by journalist Noel Murphy exposed the whole RFA process as a "*fait accompli*".

See "[Regional Forest Disagreement](#)" *Geelong Advertiser opinion* 31/3/2000.

<p>The RFA process was driven by forestry bureaucrats who openly supported clearfell logging. It was a strongly held view of both OREN and GCF from the onset, that the RFA would not resolve any issues and was in fact a "fait accompli".</p> <p>Despite this, the local conservation groups participation in the RFA process had been successful in that it had exposed to the whole community, the corrupt and incompetent manner to</p>	<p><b>Greens, loggers critical of West RFA process</b>  <b>Colac Herald</b>  <b>31 March 2000</b>  <b>Alison Knight</b></p> <p><i>We've been left out of the consultation process, so it's really been up to politicians to decide on the future of the forests</i></p> <p>Both environmentalists and the timber industry have been critical of the West RFA process.</p> <p>Otway Ranges Environment Network spokesperson Simon Birrell said he expected the West RFA to be signed by the State Government, "despite our recommendations that it be torn up".</p> <p>"The RFA process is fundamentally flawed and in its scope, it cannot fix the timber industry's problems and the conflict will go on.</p> <p>"But we're hopeful the government will set up processes to solve the water issues and look at the economical value of tourism and protection of biodiversity values," Mr Birrell said.</p> <p>"Political advisers have said the RFA is only the beginning of fixing the problem and they've acknowledged there are significant problems that still need to be fixed," he said.</p> <p>"In the short-term no conflict has or will be resolved from the RFA.</p>
<p>which the forestry bureaucracy manages public State forests in Victoria.</p> <p>OREN made it publicly clear that issues not resolved by the RFA would be the focus of the next state election due in 2002-03.</p>	<p>"But a positive of the RFA has been the way it's galvanised community support for the end to clearfell logging, and the process has been a mechanism to unite the community into positive action," Mr Birrell said.</p> <p>After months of business uncertainty, Birregurra sawmiller Stuart Bennett said unfortunately the local timber industry did not know how governments were going to act in the signing of the RFA, but he suspected it would follow the consultation paper proposals.</p> <p>Mr Bennett said he was disappointed not to have received notification about the signing and believed 'both sides' would have concerns with the RFA process.</p> <p>"We've been left out of the consultation process, so it's really been up to politicians to decide on the future of the forests.</p> <p>"We were just delivered a threat and then left with it," he said.</p> <p>Mr Bennett said sawmillers and their workers had no job certainty during the RFA process and he did not see why the signing would provide them with any more certainty.</p> <p>"The idea of closing us (Otway timber industry) down will still be around," he said.</p>

### 3. After the West RFA was signed and before it was cancelled

In signing the West RFA on the 31st March 2000, the State and Federal governments along with the native forest logging industry all foolishly thought that the debate would be over. However the Federal member for Corangamite, Stuart McArthur, a public supporter of clearfell logging the native forest in the Otways, summarised the on going problem to Federal Parliament.

#### Federal Government Hansard House of Representatives 4 September 2000. (page 20032)

Unfortunately, despite the final outcome of the RFA, some groups, especially the green groups in the Otways, particularly one, the Otways Ranges Environment Network, refuse to accept the scientific basis of the agreement.



Stewart McArthur, former Federal Member for Corangamite. (1984-2007.)

For Mr McArthur, his focus was on the science of clearfell logging and growing tree crops in 60 to 80 year rotations for woodchips. However the science regarding the impact these regrowth trees(after logging) have on reducing water yields from Otways water supply catchments to Geelong and Warrnambool had not been determined.

Hence, Mr Arthur was correct, OREN would not accept the scientific basis of the RFA when hydrology scientific research was yet to be conducted, something the RFA itself acknowledged needed to be done. (See [issues regarding clause 61](#)).

However, the State and Federal Governments were in a rush to sign off the RFA's based on the need to comply with Federal export woodchip laws rather than ensure water security from Geelong.

The Federal Government which Mr McArthur represented, had passed legislation to prohibit the export of native forest woodchips from areas not covered by an RFA. A legal Commonwealth deadline loomed for which Otways woodchips could not be exported if an RFA was not in place. Hence, the priority was to get the West RFA signed so Otways native forest woodchips could continue to be legally exported. Waiting for scientific hydrology research modelling to

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

be completed was obviously not a priority for Mr McArthur or the rest of the former Howard Federal Government.

### 3.1 Water issues undermined West RFA credibility.

The bias towards logging for woodchips rather than protecting forested water supplies was raised by the [RFA Independent Panel](#).

Over the next twelve months, hydrology research was conducted and showed that significant amount of water was being lost due to clearfell logging . The State Government tried and failed to dismiss this issue.

For more detail on the RFA and water issues, see "[Regional Forest Agreement process excluded water users](#)".

### 3.2 The community rejected the RFA process.

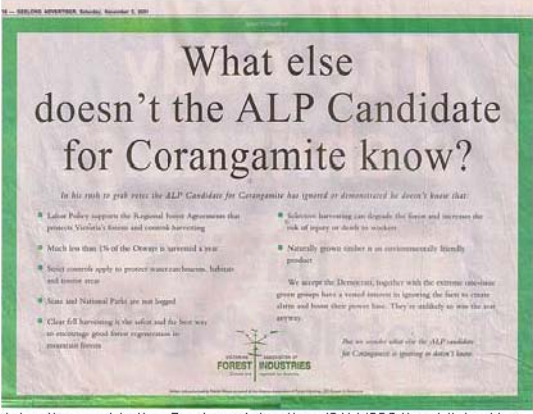
The RFA had failed to resolve key contentious issue surrounding Otway native forest logging practices in the lead up to the November 2002 State election. This failure is supported by the following facts and events:

- In the lead up to the November 2001 federal election a Saulwick poll, commissioned by the ALP- Otway Ranges Interest Group (ALP-ORIG), was conducted in the Federal Electorate of Corangamite. Over 69% of the voters polled were opposed to clearfell logging in the Otways. [Download pdf poll results](#).
- In 2001 the ALP- ORIG succeeded in getting 30 ALP branches throughout Victoria to support a ban on clearfell logging in the Otways. (See old 2002 ALP-ORIG website). ALP-ORIG attempted but failed to get ALP's Otway policies changed at the ALP State conference in May 2002. .

Inspired by the growing community opposition towards logging in the Otways, Federal ALP candidate for Corangamite, Bjork-Billings decided to go against his own parties policies and ran on an anti Otway logging platform in the lead up to the 2001 Federal election.

The forest union and Victorian Association of Forest Industries(VAFI) campaign against Billings involved personal attacks for his logging ban support.

See [Geelong Advertiser 27/10/2001 \(ORIG-website.\)](#)



Advertisement in the *Geelong Advertiser* (3/11/2001) published by Victorian Association of Forest Industries that attacked Bjork Billings character. (Click to enlarge).

- [Doctors for Forests](#) ran a very successful media campaign against Otway logging in the lead up to the November 2001 Federal Election. The Greens and Democrat political parties also promoted themselves strongly as against Otway logging to bolster their electoral appeal.
- The Wombat Forest Society did a fantastic job in exposing the maximum rates of logging allowed under all the five Victorian RFA's were far too high and unsustainable. The State government accepted this and in 2001 conducted a [Sustainable Logging Review](#). Results showed that logging rates averaged across all five of the Victorian RFA needed to be reduced by 30%. The actual reduction varied across the State. In the West RFA, there was no reduction for the maximum rates of logging for the Otways however an 80% reduction was needed for Wombat State forest area. The fact that RFA had got it so wrong on sustainable rates of logging meant their credibility was fundamentally undermined for all the non-timber forest values these RFA's purported to protect. ([Read more](#))

### 3.3 Native forest woodchip industry failed to get RFA's legislated

Despite the RFA's getting it so wrong on logging rates and water issues, the Liberal dominated Upper house tabled and passed a bill on the 12 June 2002 to try and legislate all the five Victorian RFA. The Liberals had the numbers to pass this bill in the Upper house but the ALP dominated lower house never even debated the bill and hence it never became legislation.

Gavin Jennings, (Current Environment Minister) made a speech on behalf of the Government justifying reasons for not going further with the RFA process.

Jennings many reasons included "Despite what perhaps may have been a laudable intent of trying to reach longstanding agreements about access to forestry activity, RFA's have not been successful by and large in providing certainty and long-term protection to either the forests and their habitat or to workers and operators in the timber industry." Victorian Parliament Hansard 12 June 2002.



Gavin Jennings is the current Minister for Environment and Climate Change

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

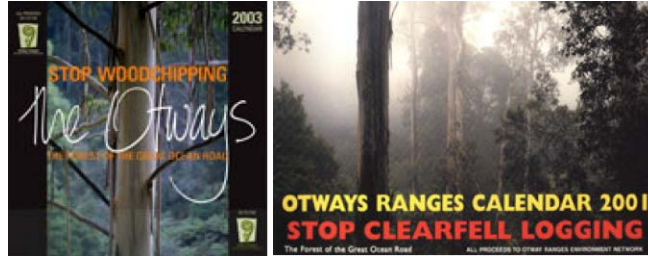
### 3.4 VAFI 2002 pre-election campaign acknowledges RFA's under threat.

<p>Having failed to get its legislation passed, the native forest woodchipping industry through the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) decided to "invest" \$250,000 to fight a political campaign in the lead up to the 2002 Victorian State election. Their focus was to get a political party elected that would support legislating all five Victoria RFA's.</p> <p>VAFI made it clear before the 2002 State election, that the justification for this "investment" was also recognition that the community opposed their destructive industry, and the government might abandon an RFA.</p>	<p>In the Colac Herald, a VAFI spokesperson Pat Wilson said;</p> <p>"Despite comprehensive agreements signed by Labor and Coalition parties at state and federal levels laying out the conservation reserves and general management areas, timber harvesting areas can and are withdrawn from schedules at a whim," Mr Wilson said. Logging industry could face more cutbacks in the lead-up to the next state election.</p> <p><a href="#">Read full story Colac Herald 20th September 2002.</a></p>
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### 3.5 OREN challenges VAFI

The VAFI campaign was challenged by OREN.

OREN fundraising efforts focused on the selling of Otways OREN calendars for the years 2001, 2002 and 2003 to the local community. These calendars contained information regarding how logging was impacting on non-timber forest values such as water and biodiversity in the Otways.



The calendars were very popular and raised over \$40,000 for OREN in the lead up to the 2002 state election.

Examples of OREN Calendars.

Calendar sales money was then used to fund a radio [listen](#) and print advertising campaign in the Geelong region in lead up to the 2002 election.



Example of OREN water advertisement. [Click to enlarge](#)

OREN made it clear to both the ALP and Liberal MP's in the Geelong region, that OREN on behalf of the community would campaign against them if they did not tear up the RFA.

Ian Trezise, the MP for Geelong, revealed the concerns he had in the lead up to the 2002 election. See [Hansard](#), [extract from September 2005](#).

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

#### 4. The 2002 Victorian State election

Within days of calling the 2002 State election, the premier Steve Bracks went to Triplet Falls in the Otways (6th November 2002) and made two announcements:

- all clearfell logging in the Otways native forest would end when sawlog licences expired in 2008 with an immediate 25% cut in sawlog licence volumes.
- a new expanded continuous National Park would be created from Anglesea to Cape Otway.  
See ALP 2002 [policy](#).



Steve Bracks. (1999-2007)

The announcement was strongly endorsed by OREN and the community. Read [2002 media statements](#).

Bracks knew public opposition to logging in the Otways was very strong and was confident enough to announce the Otway policy early in the 2002 election campaign.

The other political parties and native forest woodchip industry had about three weeks to respond to the Bracks Otways re-election policy. The Liberals and native forest woodchippers argued strongly for legislating all the Victorian RFA's and threw everything they had at the Government to try and influence voters.

##### 4.1 RFA support split major parties during 2002 Victorian State election.

The Bracks Government decision to cancel the West RFA was based on the fact that the whole community had participated in the process and successfully exposed it as a dishonest public relations exercise that only focused on clearfell logging for woodchips and a few sawlogs but ignored non-timber forest values such as tourism, water and nature conservation.


This community sentiment was used by Premier Bracks to fundamentally justify the new ALP Otway policy position.

*"We have listened to the community and we will now act on behalf of future generations to save the Otways,"* Mr Bracks said. Front page, Geelong Advertiser, 7 November 2002.

However the Liberal Party could just not see this. Instead they misrepresented the findings of the State governments

Sustainable Logging Review by claiming current logging rates were found to be sustainable for the Otways. This was a distortion of the reports findings which defined a 'maximum rate' and 'optimum rate acceptable to the community'. The optimum logging rate the Bracks government policies was promoting was (and still is) zero. See more.

Hence the ALP and Liberals forest policies were in stark contrast. The ALP wanted logging stopped, the Liberal Party supported logging the Otways under the Regional Forest Agreement. See Liberals 2002 Victorian forest policy.

<p>Opposition Liberal leader Robert Doyle just did not understand the political implications of his support to legislate all the Victorian RFAs that Prime Minister John Howard had signed. His comments in the press reflect his ignorance of the political significance the native forest logging issue had become in Victoria.</p> <p>For example, questions put to Robert Doyle by the <i>Herald Sun</i> show how out of touch he was.</p> <p><b>Extract from <i>Herald Sun</i>: 26th November 2002, page 11.</b></p> <p><b>Opposition Leader Robert Doyle spoke with the <i>Herald Sun</i>'s John Ferguson, Andrew Bolt and John Beveridge ahead of the state election.</b></p> <p>Now, I think it's one of the fascinating policy divides of the election campaign. There is an RFA in place, an agreement between the Commonwealth and the State, there is a report brought down in February of this year, the Government's own report, telling them that sustainable logging is the case in the Otways, with a saw log based industry, and two days into the election campaign Steve Bracks goes down and rips the arrangement up. I mean, presumably, for some inner city green votes. We said on the other hand, look if the signs say it's not sustainable, like in the Wombat, then we don't clear fell. But if it says it is sustainable, then you've got to make up your mind whether you want a sawlog industry or not. And we have enough forests, if you want forests, go out there, there's plenty. We do not need more forests.</p> <p><b>Herald Sun:</b> Would you agree that we've got forests coming out of our ears?</p> <p><b>Robert Doyle:</b> Yes.</p>	 <p>Robert Doyle was Liberal opposition leader during the 2002 State election.</p>
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Also see [Labor forest policy a watershed The Age, 21st November 2002](#).

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

#### 4.2 Liberals were electorally punished for their RFA support.

The first Saturday after the ALP Otway policy announcement, the *Geelong Advertiser* editorial opinion (9/11/2007) supported the Bracks ALP Otway policy and criticised the Liberals for being in a "deep sleep" in relation to community concerns.

On the actual polling day, the Liberal Party's Geelong team was decimated. It failed to win in every local seat; including the loss of two Lower House seats (Bellarine & South Barwon) and one upper house seat it previously held.

See Case Study: [Liberals lose Bellarine and South Barwon due to their Otways logging / Regional Forest Agreement support](#).

OREN ran advertising on radio and print media, attacking the Liberals for wanting to legislate logging in the Otways water supply catchments.



Example of print advertisement produced by OREN that targeted the Liberal Party Otways policies.

An OREN opinion article was published in the *Geelong Advertiser* (28 Nov 2002) and summarises why the Regional Forest Agreement was political poison to all those who supported it.

During and after the election, Geelong Liberals admitted their support for Otway logging under the Regional Forest Agreement politically sank them. See [Liberals support Otway logging ban](#).

The native forest logging industry continued to lobby the State Liberal Party to support legislation for all five Victorian RFA's. However this was exposed again by OREN in the 2006 State election. [Read more](#).

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

#### 4.3 Logging industry advertised Regional Forest Agreement demise.

The Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) openly acknowledged that the ALP Otway policies meant the West RFA was cancelled and that the other four Victorian RFA's were also vulnerable to the same fate.

To get the message out, VAFI conducted an advertising blitz, presumably funded by the \$250,000 campaign "investment" fund VAFI had [previously announced](#).

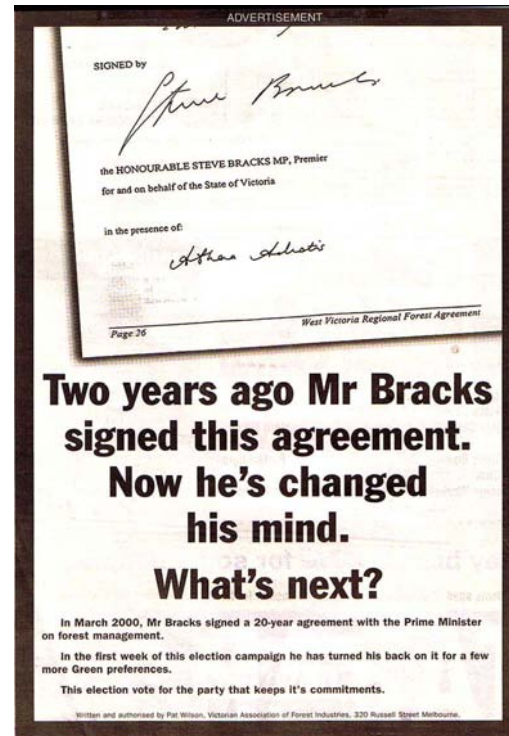
These advertisements paid for by the woodchip industry, actually helped the Otways campaign.

This advertising campaign had no impact on the final poll result in the Geelong region. Instead, the more the Liberals and logging interest groups campaigned for the Victorian RFA's to be legislated, the more votes they lost.

[See case study for Bellarine and South Barwon.](#)

Industry groups falsely claimed the State Government decision to break the West RFA was a breach of a contract.

This was disputed in an article in the *Geelong Advertiser* titled "RFA not a contract: Thomson."



[Click to enlarge.](#) Example of RFA advertisement from the Victorian Association of Forest Industries during the 2002 State election (*Geelong Advertiser* 13/11/2002).

#### 4.4 Logging industry anti Otway election campaign(2002) focused on Morwell, not Geelong.

Officials from the forestry union were furious with the ALP and campaigned to undermine the re-election of the Bracks government. Two forestry union officials were so angry with the Bracks government decision, one resigned from the ALP and both threatened to stand as an independent against ALP candidate in the seat of Geelong.

However these union officials knew they would be wasting their time. Despite all the grandstanding, neither of them stood in Geelong.

The Bracks Otway policy was overwhelmingly popular and the logging industry advertising and media campaign in Geelong was reminding the community to vote for the ALP to stop Otway native forest from being woodchipped.

<p><b>Unionist plans to lop Labor</b> <i>Geelong Advertiser 12/11/02</i></p> <p>A timber industry unionist from Moe is considering entering the race for the seat of Geelong as an independent candidate.</p> <p>Brad Platschinda lives more than 200 kilometres from Geelong, but feels issues in the city, particularly threats to industry, are "close to home".</p> <p>Disillusioned with the Labor Party for what he calls betrayal of its traditional roots, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union forestry division Gippsland organiser will speak to industry figures in Geelong before deciding whether to throw his hat in the ring.</p> <p>Mr Platschinda said Labor's pledge to ban logging in the Otways by 2008 and further reduce logging and woodchipping in the Wombat Forest prompted him to run as an independent, and Geelong was one of four seats he was considering.</p> <p>His agenda was to undo some of the damage done by the Bracks Government, he said. "The modern Labor Party has betrayed its roots and is prepared to sell the jobs of timber workers, paper workers, furniture manufacturers and anyone else if they think they might steal a few votes in the process," he said.</p> <p>"I want to remind new Labor of what traditional Labor stood for. Honesty, decency, family and the right to work."</p> <p>Asked about his knowledge of the seat and its candidates, Mr Platschinda said he was aware Labor held the seat. "I am not too familiar with the opposition," he said.</p> <p>The 30-year-old father of four, who is a former timber worker, said he would direct preferences to the candidate who would best look after workers and guarantee jobs in the industry.</p> <p>He said he expected to make a decision this week.</p>	<p><b>Union official logs off</b> <i>Herald Sun 12/11/2002</i></p> <p>A logging union official yesterday quit the ALP over its promise to end logging in the Otways.</p> <p>A senior Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union official, Jane Calvert, said she would now consider running as an independent in Geelong.</p> <p>Ms Calvert the secretary of the union's forestry division, said Labor had made a cheap grab for green preferences. "This is a blatant attack (on workers) for political expediency," Ms Calvert said.</p> <p>"It was a hard decision and I didn't take it lightly."</p> <p>Last week, Premier Steve Bracks announced a \$50 million plan to buy back all timber licences in the Otways. Ms Calvert's resignation follows news that the CFMEU's Gippsland organiser, Brad Platschinda, would consider running against Labor in a rural seat.</p>
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The industry groups and Forestry Union conceded defeat in the Otway during the State election campaign and instead began a defensive *containment campaign*. This *containment campaign* was designed to send a warning to the State government to not repeat what was happening to the Otways in eastern Victorian forests.

Thus the safe ALP seat of Morwell (Latrobe Valley) in Eastern Victoria was targeted by the union who stood their own independent candidate.

Within the electorate of Morwell there is a strong pro-logging community centred around the Australian Paper Pulp mill and its associated native forest logging industry. An anti-Otways campaign in Morwell had a better chance of applying some political leverage over the State Government to not extend its Otways policies to other areas. Of particular concern to the loggers is a possible future ban on logging in the Melbourne State forest water supply catchments, a ban similar to what had effectively been announced for the Otways.

A "lavish" advertising campaign played out in the Latrobe valley during the last two weeks of 2002 Victorian State election campaign and was heralded as a successfully warning by the native forest logging industry.

[See detail about loggers 2002 Morwell election campaign.](#)

### **5. OREN / Otways campaign a "Watershed". Loggers pay tribute to OREN.**

The OREN / Otways campaign impacted half (50%) of all the RFA's signed in Australia. Of the ten RFA's that have been signed, five are in Victoria. Of these, the West RFA was cancelled outright and the other four Victorian RFA have not received the complementary legislation from the State Government that would lock them in.

The Federal Liberal forestry Minister publicly acknowledged the demise of all five of the Victoria RFA's during the closing stages of the 2002 election campaign at a VAFI dinner.



**Extract of Senator Macdonald's speech to the Victorian Association of Forest Industries' annual dinner on the 22 November 2002.**

Ladies and gentlemen, by contrast the Commonwealth Government does remain committed to the 5 Victorian Regional Forest Agreements. Our Government enacted the RFA legislation as Greg just mentioned in May this year. While the passage of the Commonwealth RFA has removed any sovereign risk by a future Commonwealth Government, the inescapable reality of course is that State Governments do bear the Constitutional responsibility for forest management.

That's why I call upon the next Government of Victoria, which ever it is, to introduce complementary RFA legislation to provide legislative backing to Victoria's RFA's. And whilst I agree that an agreement signed by the Victorian Premier and the Prime Minister should not need legislative backing obviously history has shown that is absolutely essential and as I say it is essential that we have that legislative backing in Victoria to lock in once and for all the security to forest industries and regional communities and for conservation interests that the RFA's were certainly intended to provide.



Queensland Senator, Ian MacDonald, former Federal Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation.

Hence the OREN / Otways campaign has been recognised as a “watershed” by both academics and the native forest logging industry in turning around the march to native forest 'resource security' through the Regional Forest Agreement process.

According to Wikipedia, 'watershed' is defined in this context as “Any moment or event separating two distinct periods of time, a momentous event that alters the course of time.”

See *Labor forest policy a watershed*, *The Age*, 21st November 2002.

In what can only be described as a 'tribute', a report prepared for the Victorian Association of Forest Industries in March 2006 by Allen Consulting titled “*Victoria's Forest Industries, An Economic Impact Assessment*”, reported that the native forest logging industry regards the Otways campaign outcome as a “watershed” that had a sever impact on State wide native forest logging industry.

**Victoria's Forest Industries, An Economic Impact Assessment**

**CHAPTER 5 POLICY ISSUES**

**5.2 Resource Security**

**The Otways decision (page 47)**

..... in 2002 the Government announced that there would be no further logging in the Otways. This decision, which occurred just two years after the relevant RFA was concluded, appeared to have been taken for political rather than scientific reasons. At any rate, even though it only reduced the Statewide resource available for harvesting by around 4 per cent, the impact of this decision on the

The industry representatives interviewed in the course of this project generally regarded the Otways decision as a watershed and felt that they no longer felt there was any policy certainty as regards the future resource available for harvesting.



The native forest woodchipping industry acknowledges OREN's campaign to stop clearfell logging Otway forests, as pictured above, was a "watershed".

Download Allen Consulting report “Victoria's Forest Industries, An Economic Impact Assessment, 2006” from OREN or VAFI website.

The Allen Consulting report and Otways campaign was reported in the Business section of The Age in 2006.

OREN had a right of reply letter published in The Age a few days later.

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

In conclusion, the following Hansard from 2004 articulates the fact that the legislated RFA resource security agenda being pushed by native forest woodchip companies in Victoria was crushed largely thanks to the Otways campaign.

**Victorian Parliament Hansard, 5 October 2004, Page 593**  
**Timber industry: Regional Forest Agreements**

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) -- My question is to the Premier. Is the government going to honour the remaining regional forest agreements in Victoria, or is it going to destroy the timber industry, just as Mark Latham proposes to destroy it in Tasmania?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) -- I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. I indicate to this house that the policy referred to by the Leader of The Nationals -- the policy announced by the Leader of the federal Labor Party, Mark Latham, when he said he would have a scientific examination of the future of the regional forest agreement and a significant compensation package -- is something that I support.

I indicate to the Leader of The Nationals that when we came to office we had an unsustainable position in our forests whereby there were contracts signed up for timber which was not there. We had to face up to the science and to what was there to provide for those contracts. As a consequence we had to reduce logging in Victoria by some 30 per cent across the board. We have done that with Our Forests Our Future. We have raised compensation of about \$80 million for communities, for workers in the industry and for companies in the industry, and that compensation has been completed -- and completed successfully. We now have a much more honest, open and transparent system in our forests here in Victoria. We took action to cancel one of our regional forest agreements here in Victoria, which I committed to at the last election when I committed to creating a new national park in the Otway Ranges. We know the National Party is opposed to the new national park; we think the Liberal Party is opposed to it.

Mr Ryan -- On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. He should at least say that he is after the Greens preferences, just like Mark Latham is in Tasmania!

The SPEAKER -- Order! I believe the Leader of The Nationals is debating the issue! The Premier, to continue.

Mr BRACKS -- In relation to the regional forest agreements, we cancelled the agreement associated with the Otway National Park, and we are proceeding with the national park through a reference to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Committee. It is interesting to note that we know the National Party is opposed to that national park but we are not sure about the Liberal Party. What we do know is that the local federal member for Corangamite, who said he was opposed to the national park, is now running at 250 miles an hour to say he is in favour of it! It is interesting to see how he wants to get on board with a good environmental policy from our government. We know where the National Party stands: it is opposed to it, and we know it has a different view to us. We are not sure where the Liberal Party is, but we are committed to a much better, transparent process in our forests and committed to a new national park for the Otway Ranges.

## Appendix II

**Between 1999 -2002:**

**the “Water not Woodchips” campaign shut down all native forest logging in the Geelong/Otway domestic water supply catchments.**

Extract from: [http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/otway\\_water.html](http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/otway_water.html)



See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

## Between 1999 -2002 the “Water not Woodchips” campaign shut down all native forest logging in the Geelong/Otway domestic water supply catchments.

### Practical results to date

The OREN/Otways "Water not Woodchips" campaign was critical in getting broad public 'political' opposition towards continued clearfell logging within the Otways domestic water supply catchments.

### Achievements of the Otway "water not woodchips" campaign:

- The State government suspended all logging within the Geelong-Otway domestic water supply catchments immediately after the 2002 State election. This is now five years ago. ([See catchment list](#)).
- The ban on logging in the Geelong water catchment area will continue for the [final Otways logging season 2007/2008](#). This ban was confirmed in a letter from the Department of Sustainability and Environment. ([DSE 16 Oct 2007, page 4, PDF 1MB](#))
- Most of the strategic Geelong and Warrnambool water supply catchment were added to the Great Otway National Park in 2005. ([See catchment list](#)).
- Legislation is now in place to ban logging in the Forest Park component of the Warrnambool water supply catchments from July 2008 onwards.



Forest protests in 1997 stopped this forest within 200 meters of the West Barwon dam from being clearfell logged. This forest is now protected within the Great Otways National Park. See more.

### How was logging stopped in the Geelong/Otway water supply catchments?

1. [Background](#)
2. [Regional Forest Agreement process excluded water users.](#)
3. [Otway Forest Hydrology Reference Group.](#)
4. [Government and forestry bureaucracy reaction to SKM Otway hydrology research.](#)
5. [Community groups' reaction to SKM Otway hydrology research.](#)
6. [November 2002 State election](#)
7. [Victorian Liberal Party 2002 electoral obliteration](#)
8. [Cancelled West Regional Forest Agreement](#)

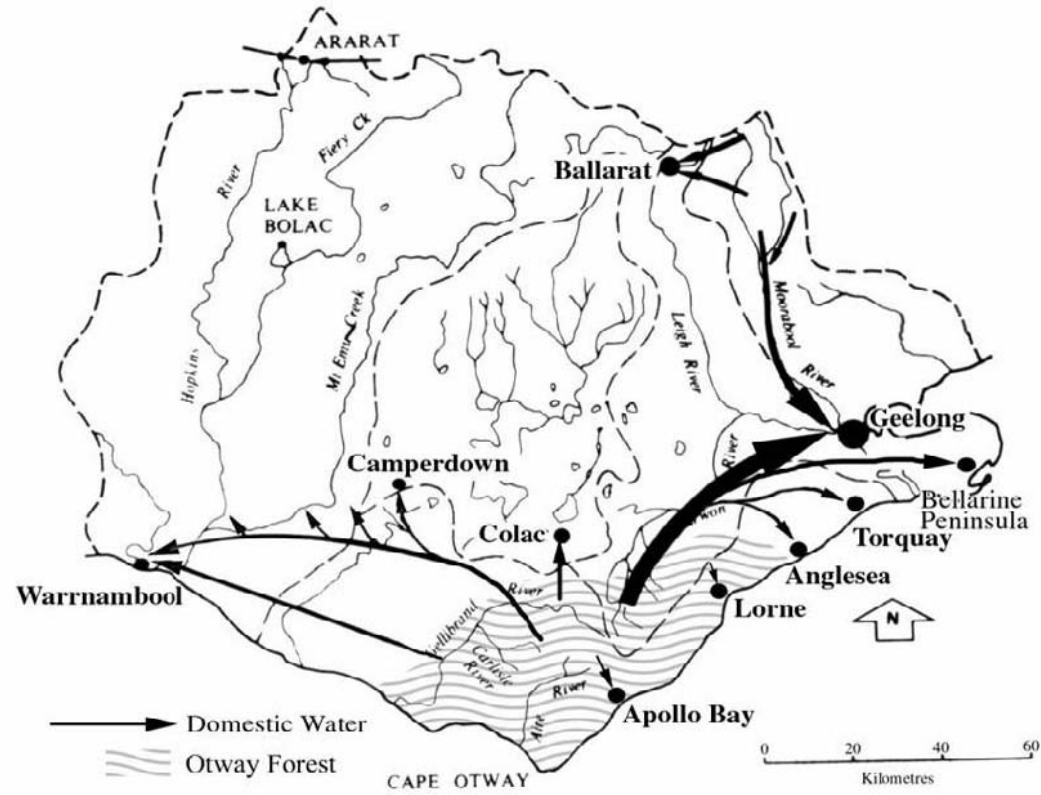
#### 1. Background

The Otway Ranges Environment Network (OREN) working in conjunction with the Geelong Community Forum (GCF) and supported by the Geelong Environment Council, raised community awareness regarding the impact of logging on water quality and quantity from the Otways.

The issues is relevant for the 300,000 people in South West Victoria who rely on Otway forested catchments for their domestic water supply. OREN and GCF put together [reports on the impact of logging on water quality and quantity](#) and networked the issue throughout the community.

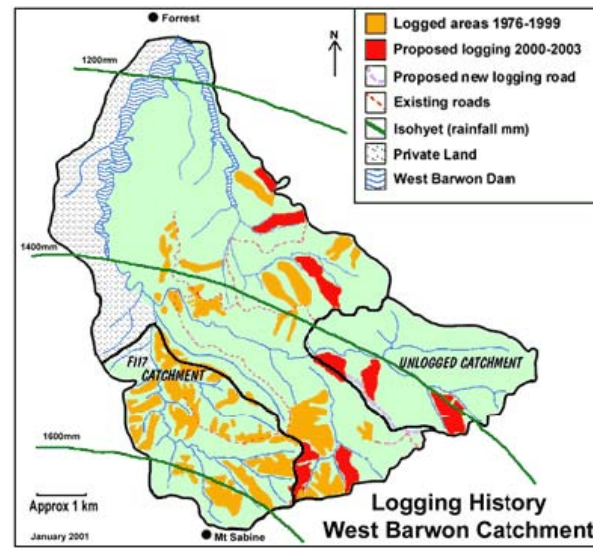
Research shows that clearfell logging in water catchments is detrimental to water quality and quantity. Once a forest has been cut down, it takes 150-200 years for water yield to return to pre-logging levels as young regrowth forest consumes more water than old mature forests. In the Otways, logging roads and logging operations cause landslides & erosion which increases turbidity in the creeks and rivers thus effecting the quality of the water for drinking as well as aquatic stream life. [See OREN water report to find out more.](#)

**South Western Victoria - water supply structure**



For more than 20 years there has been considerable public concern regarding the impacts clearfell logging has on the quantity and quality of water from domestic water supplies catchments in the Otway Ranges. Past community concern pushed the State government into conducting numerous inquiries and research projects such as:

- 1982 - Interdepartmental Task force Inquiry into "Pulpwood harvesting for Woodchips in the Otways".
- 1985 - Farrell Novotony water quality studies for the West Barwon, West Barham (not published) and Porcupine Creek. (not completed)
- 1988 - Silvicultural Systems Project hydrology research into impacts of logging on water yield (terminated in 1994, not completed)
- 1988 - Ray Moran Otway water yield modelling, "The effects of timber harvesting operations on Streamflows in the Otway Ranges"
- 1992 - Otway Forest Management Plan (missing prescriptions to protect water yield from logging).
- 1999 - ALP State Government elected with policies to conduct new hydrology research in the Otways.



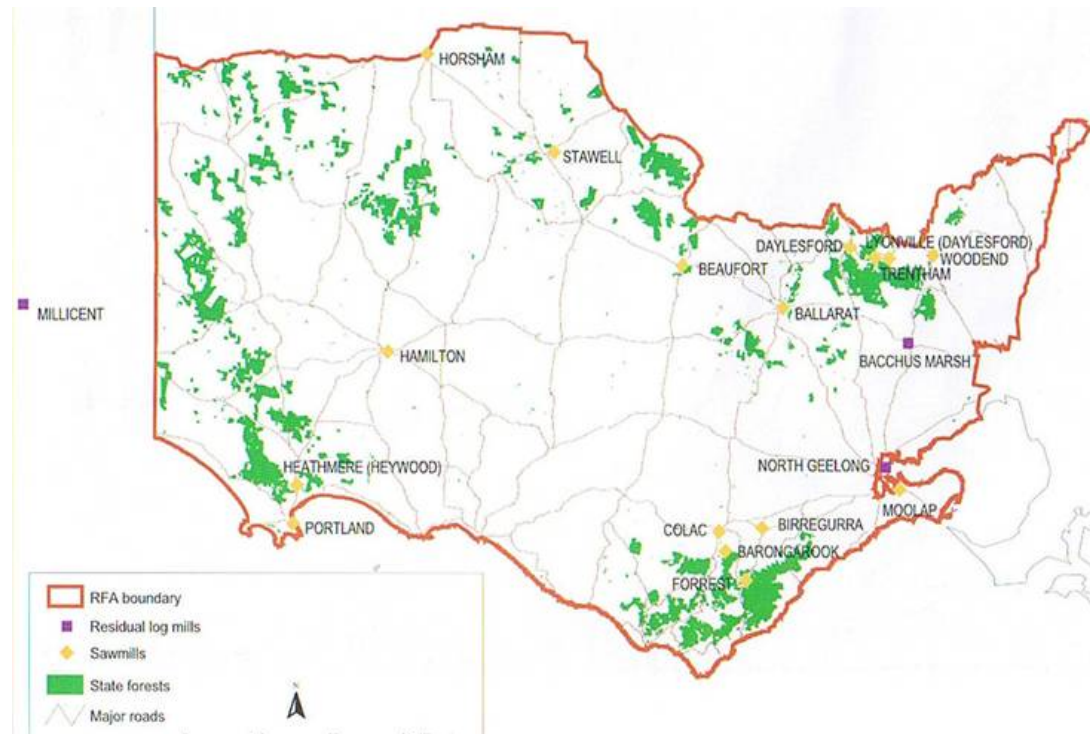


Forest clearfell logged for woodchips in the Geelong domestic water supply catchment (after the Regional Forest Agreement was signed in 2000).

## 2. Regional Forest Agreement process excluded water users.

In 1999, the West Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) did not acknowledge water as a primary economic output from Otway forested catchments. Hence urban water users in Geelong were deliberately excluded from the West RFA consultation process despite their water catchments being directly affected by this 20 year agreement.

The map below shows Geelong City excluded from the West RFA study area despite the Midway export woodchip mill being within Geelong metro area.



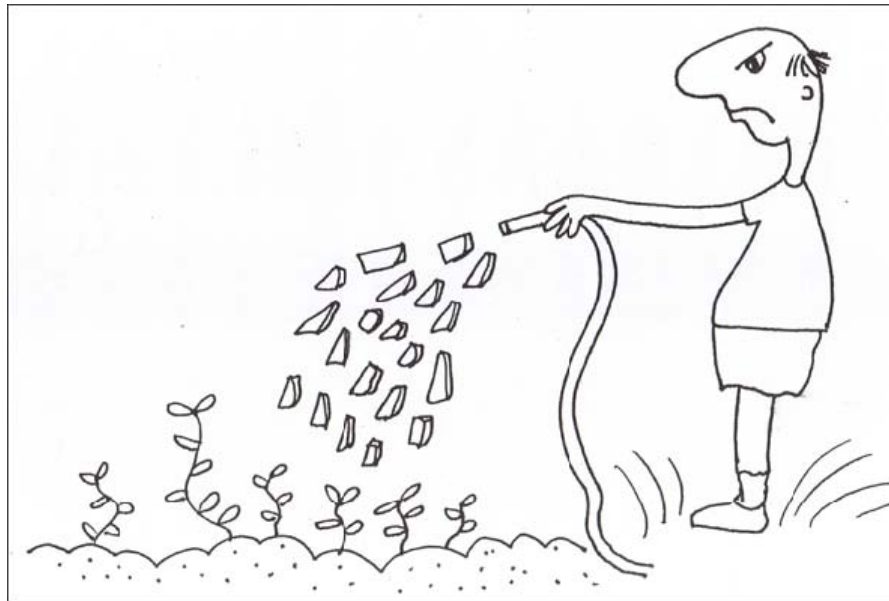
The next map shows in detail how the West RFA boundary goes around metro Geelong to exclude its people from the formal consultation process.

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).



OREN and GCF turned this lack of consultation around by lobbying water users and their local government representatives in Geelong and Warrnambool to include themselves as water stakeholders. To do this:

- the GCF organised several public meetings in Geelong under the banner 'Our Water Our Forests Our Future'. (Note the State government stole the 'Our Water Our Future' part for its own purposes at a later date). This [GCF web page](#) has the dates and speeches that were made.
- the Commonwealth and State governments were embarrassed into consulting with Geelong water users and hosted a major water forum in Geelong on the 1st December 1999. (See [Proceeding of a Water Forum](#) PDF 200kb)
- in response to growing community concern, environment minister Garbutt set up a *West Victorian Independent Panel* to review all RFA public submissions. The *West Victorian Independent Panel* recorded the fact there was significant public opposition to logging in the Otways water supply catchments before the West RFA was signed. (See [report extracts regarding logging vs water supply issues](#)).



Geelong resident trying to water garden with woodchips rather than water from the Otways. Source GCF publication.

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

The 20 year West RFA was signed on the 31 March 2000 by the Federal and State governments. It was signed with the full knowledge that there was a lack of scientific understanding regarding the impacts of clearfell logging on the Geelong and Warrnambool water supply.

However a clause 61 was added to the West RFA which provided a requirement to have hydrology research completed for the Otways. However while this scientific research occurred, logging would be allowed to proceed in the Otway water supply catchments.

The inclusion of clause 61 in the West RFA was a victory for the community campaign to date. The logging industry had consistently argued that existing rules were good enough and dismissed the need for further Otway hydrology scientific research. (See [Industry comments regarding logging vs water supply issues](#)).

No other previous RFA signed in Victoria had the requirements of Clause 61 included.

When the RFA was signed, Minister Garbutt made misleading assurances that the RFA process would provide domestic water supply catchments with additional protection from logging practices.

In a [press release](#) dated 31 March 2000, the Minister stated:

"Ms. Garbutt said additional restrictions had been placed on timber harvesting in the Otways in preparation for a hydrology study into the effects of logging on water yields and quality in catchments."



Former Environment  
Minister Garbutt

However logging prescriptions nominated in the March 2000 Regional Forest Agreement to protect water yield were exactly the same as the existing prescriptions in the 1992 Otway Forest Management Plan.

It was exposed in the Age (13 May 2000) that these claims made by Minister Garbutt were false.

### 3. Otway Forest Hydrology Reference Group.

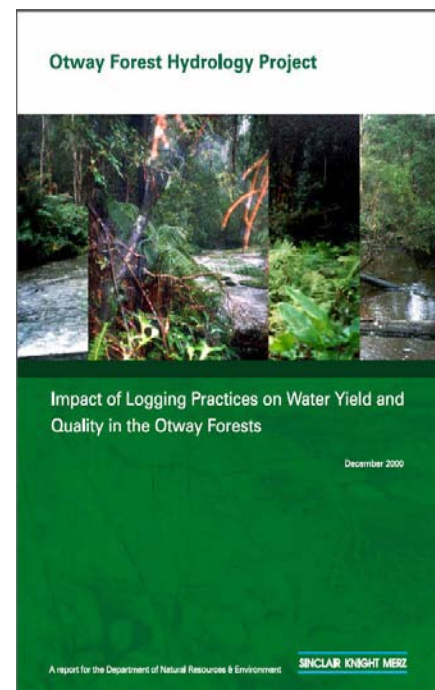
Following the signing of the West RFA in March 2000, the State government followed through with its election commitment to conduct further hydrology research and meet the requirements of West RFA clause 61.

In June 2000, the Minister appointed the Otway Forest Hydrology Reference Group (OFHRG). OFHRG was made up of community stakeholder groups that included:

- local Government (five councils)
  - conservation groups (three)
  - water authorities (three)
  - native hardwood industry representatives (five)
  - plantations industry; and
  - DNRE
- The overall aim of the hydrology study was to investigate the impact logging has on water yield and quality. [Terms of Reference for the hydrology research](#) required a two stage approach. Stage One was a desktop study to look at existing data with an aim to establish trends and find information gaps. Stage Two was a longer term research project designed to fill in information gaps determined by Stage One. (Stage Two was never started).
  - The OFHRG selected Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) to conduct 'Stage One' of the research. The SKM desktop research was conducted with consultation and input from the OFHRG.
  - SKM completed Stage One and published the results in a report "Impact of Logging Practices on Water Yield and Quality in the Otway Forests" (December 2000).



See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).



The Otway hydrology research was completed in just four months (1st December 2000). The SKM report was publicly released in January 2001, only seven months after the project started and less than a year after the West RFA signed.

#### **4. Government and forestry bureaucracy reaction to SKM Otway hydrology research.**

The Victorian government, with advice from the forest management bureaucracy, made a political decision to dismiss the significance of the water loss as result from logging. The Government then allowed the forestry bureaucracy to begin a simple and superficial public relations campaign with misleading statistics and claims designed to create a public perception that the water loss issues exposed by the SKM research were not important or could never occur due to claims the catchments would burn too regularly.

See Minister Garbutt public statement (19 Jan 2001).

NRE propaganda flyer was also published titled "*Water and the Otways Forests, a hydrology study, 2001.*"

#### **5. Community groups' reaction to SKM Otway hydrology research.**

OREN and GCF disputed the government interpretation and began publicly promoting;

- the water to be gained if logging stopped and that the water had a greater economic value compared with the woodchips and sawlogs from clearfell logged native forest in the Geelong catchments,
- the fact that the frequency of severe fires in wet forests is naturally low (once every 300 years) and that high rainfall forests have an excellent chance of maturing and providing high water yields for a long time.

See the Age (11 December 2000).

A petition in mid 1999 calling for the immediate cessation of clearfell logging in Otway water catchments obtained more than 6,000 signatures in two days within the Geelong region. This petition was presented to State Parliament by local Geelong MP, Peter Loney.

The public response to this awareness campaign was very positive. In 2001 a Saulwick poll was conducted in the Federal Electorate of Corangamite. Over 69% of the voters polled were opposed to clearfell logging in the Otways. Download pdf poll results.

The OREN and GCF views were also strongly supported at a local government level. The City of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast Shire, Warrnambool City Council, Moyne Shire heard both sides of the argument; with presentations from OREN and the State Government forestry bureaucracy. These councils then passed resolutions wanting logging to be moved out of the Otway forested domestic water supply catchments.

Warrnambool City Council  
(c) NOTICE OF MOTION No. 2058



Notice is given that at the Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held on Monday 17 December 2001, I propose to move:-  
"That the Council inform the Minister for Environment and Conservation, the Hon. Sherryl Garbutt, MP that Warrnambool City Council opposes all logging and clear felling of native forest in the South West Water catchment area of the Otways. Accordingly, Council requests the Minister to halt all logging in the catchment area immediately, and to stop the proposed building of a new road this summer season to a coupe in the lower Atkins Creek area".  
CR. JOHN KENNEALLY  
12 December 2001

Greater Geelong City Council  
Agenda for Ordinary Meeting  
24 November 1999



**WEST VICTORIA REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT  
Recommendation:**

That Council advises the Victorian Regional Forest Agreement Steering Committee that:

2) It recommends the introduction of new measures restricting logging operations to areas which are less strategically important for water catchment purposes.

**The Moyne and Surf Coast Shires also supported a ban on logging in Otway water supply catchments.**



#### 6. November 2002 State election

In the 12 month lead up to the 2002 state election, OREN funded a "water not woodchips" media campaign within the Geelong region. This included:

- radio advertisements on K-Rock and Bay FM. ([Listen now](#). 480kb MP3)
- local newspaper advertising.



**Woodchipping is killing Geelong's water.**

Each year enough water to supply Colac is lost through clearfelling in catchments. Woodchips or water for your kids? It's your choice. Stop clearfelling the Otways.

Please send donations to oren, PO Box Apollo Bay, 3233 or check out [www.oren.org.au](http://www.oren.org.au)

**otway ranges** environment network



OREN 11

REN election advertisement, Geelong Advertiser, 2/11/2002.

The Bracks government accepted public concern over logging in the Otways and announced policies during the November 2002 State election campaign to end all logging in the Otways by 2008. The government won an overwhelming mandate to end logging in the Otways through the democratic election processes.

Even long time critics of the conservation movement such as Daryl Mclure (Opinion, 25 November 2002, Geelong Advertiser) concede that, "*maybe logging old growth forests, especially in water catchments areas does have to stop.*"

As a result of the new policies, the State government immediately suspended all logging within the Geelong-Otway water supply catchments (now five years ago). Most of the strategic Geelong and Warrnambool water supply catchment were added to the Great Otway National Park in 2005.

#### **7. Victorian Liberal Party 2002 electoral obliteration**

During the 2002 state election campaign, the Victorian Liberal Party supported continued logging in the Otways under the rules determined by the [Regional Forest Agreement](#). This included continued logging the Geelong water supply catchments.

The Liberal Party's Geelong team was decimated. It failed to win in every local seat; including the loss of two Lower House seats and one upper house seat it previously held.

See Case Study: [Liberals lost Victorian State seats of Bellarine and South Barwon due to support for Otways logging under the Regional Forest Agreement.](#)

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

**Victorian Liberals recognise Otway people power mandate in 2005.**

In 2005, when legislation was passed to create the Great Otway National Park and ban logging in the Otways after 2008, the Victorian State Liberal opposition supported the legislation and acknowledged the Bracks government Otway mandate in State Parliament.

**From Hansard: Hon. Philip Davis, Upper House Liberal Member for Gippsland. *National Parks (Otways and other amendments) Bill, 14/9/2005.***

"Members of Parliament contest elections based around a policy debate. When a government wins a clear mandate for its policy positions there is an obligation under our democratic process to respect that mandate. I have to say that on this issue I respect the mandate the Bracks government won because it was so emphatic in terms of a policy position and it was one of the central planks in the return of the Bracks government."

[Read more](#) about what the Victorian Liberals said.



Hon. Philip Davis, Upper House Liberal Member for Gippsland.

**8. Cancelled West Regional Forest Agreement**

To protect the Otways water supply catchments from clearfell logging and create the Great Otway National Park, the [West Regional Forest Agreement was cancelled](#) by the Bracks Government.

## Appendix III

### **Loggers' campaign in Morwell to contain the Otway/OREN outcome.**

Extract from: <http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/morwell.htm>



See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

## Loggers campaign to contain the Otway/OREN outcome.

1. Anti Otway 2002 election campaign focused Morwell, not Geelong.
2. Morwell electorate sends a warning regarding the Otways.
  - 2.1 Forestry Union candidate
  - 2.2 Victorian Association of Forest Industries
  - 2.3 Victorian Liberal Party
3. Loggers and Liberals declare success in Morwell. Bracks destroys Liberals everywhere else.
4. Did Australia Paper fund the loggers "lavish" advertising campaign in Morwell?
5. Other trade unions did not support Forestry Union's candidate.

### **1. Anti Otway 2002 election campaign focused on Morwell, not Geelong.**

The electorate of Morwell located in the Latrobe Valley is over 300 km from the Otways. Woodchip and sawlogs logs from Otway native were never sent to the Latrobe Valley hence the decision to stop logging in the Otways had no direct effect on industries associated with native forest logging in the Latrobe Valley.

Yet the native forest woodchippers needed to send the Victorian State government a warning to not repeat the ban on logging in the Otways. Hence a defensive campaign to protect ongoing logging in the forests of eastern Victoria, in particular the Melbourne's Water Supply Catchments, began in earnest in the second week of the 2002 State election campaign, with the focus on the electorate of Morwell.

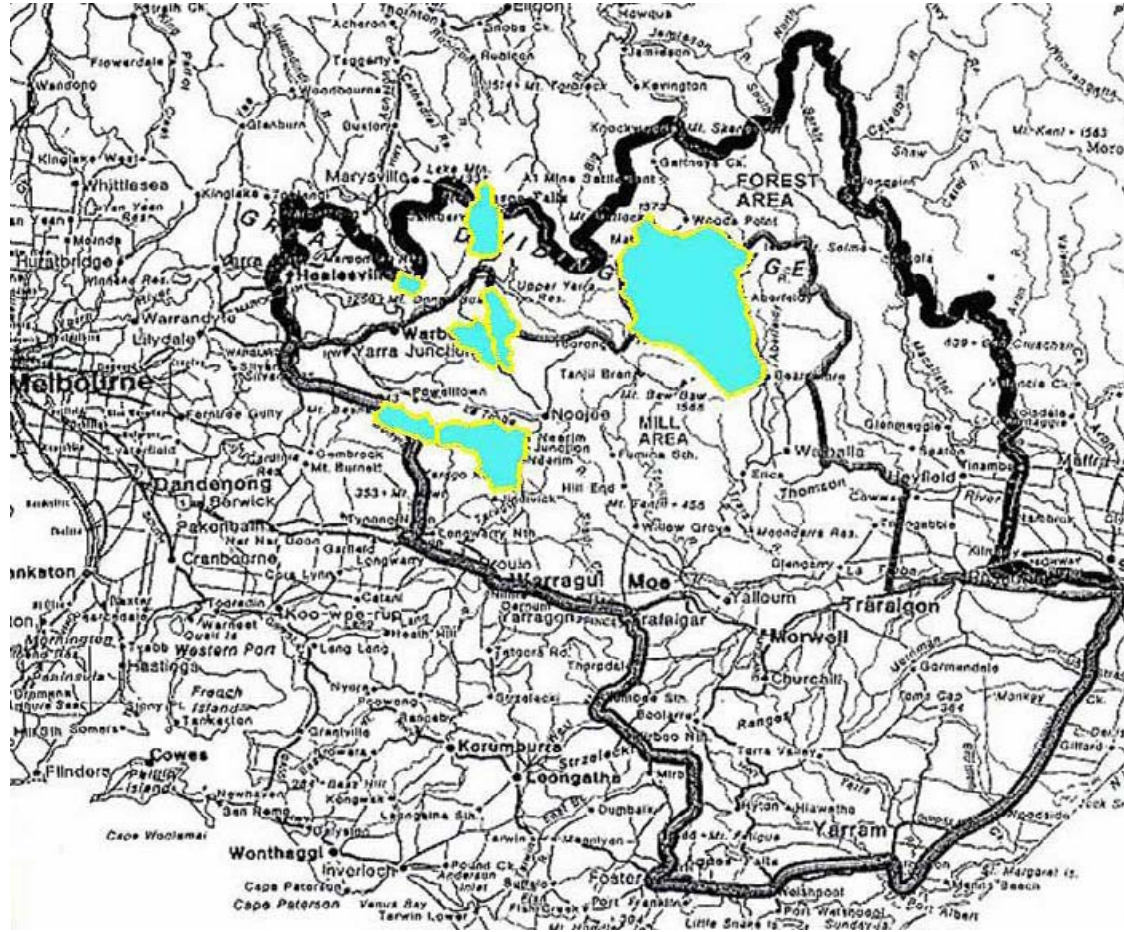
### **So why Morwell?**

Morwell has a strong pro-logging community centred around the employees at the Australian Paper pulp/paper mill at Marysvale and the associated native forest logging industry.

Australian Paper, the manufacturer of popular paper product brands such as Reflex, is the biggest user of native forest woodchips in Victoria. Australian Paper has a legislated supply arrangement with the Victorian State government under the [Forests \(Wood Pulp Agreement\) Act 1996](#). This legislation means over a third of all public land native forest woodchips from Victoria are sent to Australian Paper every year (about 450,000 cubic meters per annum).

Under Section 14(2) of the Act, the Victorian Government is required to find at least 300,000 cubic metres of woodchip per annum for the Latrobe Valley pulp mill until the year 2030. An average of 130,000 cubic meters of woodchips have been taken from the Melbourne State Forest water catchments over the six years to 2004-2005. This rate is projected to continue until the year 2030.

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).



The Act defines a "Forest Area", shown within the thick line on map (page 29 of the [Act](#)) as the area where Australian Paper woodchips must be sourced. This "Forest Area" includes almost all of the Melbourne State forest water supply catchments as shown highlighted in blue.

A campaign in Morwell had a better chance of applying some political leverage over the State Government to not expand its Otways policies.

## 2. Morwell electorate sends a warning regarding the Otways.

The anti-Otways campaign in Morwell involved the forestry division of the CFMEU, people associated with the Australian Paper pulp mill at Maryvale, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries, Timber Communities Australia and the Victorian Liberal Party.

**Current Issues Brief**  
**No. 13 2002-03**  
**Victorian Election 2002**  
**Commonwealth Government**

### **Morwell (page 18 extract)**

The Bracks Government's promise to end logging in the Otway ranges brought out much timber worker hostility. After toying with nominating for the Labor marginals of Geelong or Narracan, Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union organiser for Gippsland, Brad Platschinda, decided to challenge Labor in the Gippsland seat of Morwell, a seat where the union was said to have more than 1200 members. A resident of Moe, Platschinda accused Labor of chasing Green votes at the expense of its long-term supporters.

[Download whole document \(PDF\)](#)

### 2.1 Forest Union Candidate

Soon after Bracks announced new [Otways policies](#), the CFMEU forestry union began promoting a pro-logging candidate, Brad Platschinda, who was prepared to stand in a marginal seat. [Geelong was initially considered by Mr Platschinda](#) but soon rejected, presumably due to the fact the he would get no votes.

Morwell was eventually chosen and Mr Platschinda made it publicly very clear he was standing as candidate for the native forest logging "industry" to stop the Otways "precedent" from having "devastating flow-on effects".

Mr Platschinda ran against the ALP candidate Brendan Jenkins, who was in a safe ALP seat and expected to win.

See water vs woodchip and the West RFA.

Given the seat of Morwell was about 300 km by road on the other side of the State from the Otways, it was possible Mr Jenkins knew nothing about the formulation of the ALP Otways policies.

**Media from the Forest Union candidate**



The fact the Otways decision did not directly affect the local logging industry in Morwell was publicly acknowledged by Mr Platschinda several times.

**Union official to run for M'well  
Latrobe Valley Express  
14 Nov 2002 pg 3  
Neil Hickey**

THE seat of Morwell has a fifth candidate after CFMEU Gippsland organiser Brad Platschinda confirmed yesterday he would contest the safe Labor seat as an independent.

(Article continues)

Mr Platschinda has never been a member of the ALP but acknowledged as a union leader his decision to oppose a Labor candidate was unusual.

However he was quick to argue the recent State Government decision to place restrictions on timber harvesting in the Wombat and Otway forests was equally unusual.

He said the move would cripple the timber industry and have devastating flow-on effects.

(Article continues)

"Obviously Morwell's not currently a seat that's directly affected by the Bracks Government's decision over logging. But it's one where we believe we can maximise the vote because Brendan's taken Keith Hamilton's place in the ALP. And for myself we have a lot of union members in Morwell."


(article continues)

**Note: Other Unions did not endorse the Forestry Unions campaign. See below.**

The Express, Monday, 18 November, 2002 - Page 11

ADVERTISEMENT

# Vote 1



## Brad Platschinda INDEPENDENT FOR MORWELL

A *Real* worker who will work for the Valley

For too long Government resources have gone to marginal city seats, while the Latrobe Valley has missed out. Labor takes you for granted, the rest have written you off. Brad Platschinda is not a career politician. He is a hard worker, who grew up in the Valley and is committed to the community.

A vote for Brad is a vote to:

- Support local jobs
- Support local services
- Support local industry
- Support local families

*Brad Platschinda - the only **Real** choice for  
strong local representation*

Authorised: Peter Kelly, 19 Madden Street, Morwell, 3840.

This full page advertisement was run four times in the Latrobe Valley Express on the 18, 21, 25, 28 of November 2002. In most of these editions, there were multiple advertisements for this candidate.

<p><b>Independent preference blow to Labor candidate</b> <b>Latrobe Valley Express</b> <b>21 Nov 2002 pg 8</b> <b>Neil Hickey</b></p> <p>INDEPENDENT candidate for Morwell Brad Platschinda has delivered a blow to Brendan Jenkins' election chances, placing the Labor candidate second last in his preferences.</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>His decision to place Mr Jenkins second last was in response to the government's decision this month to put an end to logging in the Otway forest by 2008, a decision certain to cost more than 70 jobs.</p> <p>"The Labor Government has forgotten its core values. It's prepared to bow down to minority political groups all for the possibility of chasing some cheap votes in place of timber workers' jobs."</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>"I would suggest Steve Bracks will have to take a look at his policy because the feeling I'm getting is that I'm going to go pretty well down here and he might want to change what he's doing," he said.</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>Mr Platschinda accepted the Morwell electorate would feel the effects of timber industry cuts less than others, but maintained he was concerned at the precedent it created.</p> <p>"The way the State Government has gone about practically tearing up the RFAs in the Otways and the Midlands areas, anything's possible," he said, before highlighting his concern the government may "grab at every Green vote" to claim a second term.</p>	<p><b>Job Security in Valley laid to rest</b> <b>Latrobe Valley Express</b> <b>28 Nov 2002 pg 8</b> <b>Neil Hickey</b></p> <p>IN easily the most memorable campaign stunt of the election campaign, a mock funeral was held in Traralgon this morning for job security.</p> <p>The stunt was the brainchild of Morwell independent candidate Brad Platschinda who said job security - my apologies, Job Security - was dearly loved by all in the Latrobe Valley and that its untimely death would be widely felt.</p> <p>Mr Platschinda's mock funeral was the latest installment in what has been a sustained campaign against the Labor Government's commitment to job creation and employment in the timber industry in particular.</p> <p>"Job Security will be sorely missed," Mr Platschinda said.</p> <p>"We all know that Job Security has been sick for a while. Unfortunately, grubby deals between Labor and the Greens, the selling off of jobs for preferences and the continued threat to the power industry was just too much for poor old Job Security to bare. It seems the Premier's own physician, Spin Doctor, was unable to help."</p> <p>A wake was held in Victory Park after the "funeral".</p> <p>Mr Platschinda said Job Security was survived by Political Opportunism, Rising Unemployment and Economic Decline.</p>
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## 2.2 Victorian Association of Forest Industries

The Victorian Association of Forest Industries also advertised during the 2002 State election campaign in Morwell. In the example advertisement below, there is mention that a [Regional Forest Agreement has been cancelled](#), (with no reference specifically made to the Otways). The advertisements message was about containment by electing people who will protect access to forest resources.


# Unless they stand up for you, why would you give them a seat?

**Labor seems to be cruising to an easy win in this State election, but don't let them take you for granted!**

Decisions have been made in Melbourne about farm dams, firewood, and marine and forest parks with little understanding how they affect your local economy or jobs.

**Companies will close and hundreds of jobs will go.**

Forest communities had certainty about their jobs and their future because the Premier had signed 20-year forest agreements. Now, after only two years that certainty is gone just to win a few city Green preferences.



What does this mean for Agreements in the rest of the State and other rural industries?

This election, use your vote to send a clear message to the Labor Government and the Greens.

**Regional communities must have a greater say in their future.**

**Unless the Labor candidate can demonstrate that they will stand-up for your interests, then they don't deserve your support.**

Written and authorised by Pat Wilson, Victorian Association of Forest Industries, 320 Russell Street Melbourne.

This advertisement from the Victorian Association of Forest Industries was run in the Latrobe Valley express on the 28th November 2002, only days before the actual poll.

## 2.3 Victorian Liberal Party

The Liberals also ran a similar media scare campaign in the Morwell electorate in 2002 focused on a message that the "greenies" were coming to town.

See [water vs woodchip and the West RFA](#).

<p><b>Libs allay timber concern</b> <b>Latrobe Valley Express</b> <b>18 Nov 2002 pg 7</b> <b>Renee Kurowski</b></p> <p>LIBERAL Upper House Leader Bill Forwood was in Latrobe Valley on Friday to discuss issues of concern such as the forest policy, Kyoto Protocol and Dutson Downs.</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>Mr Forwood believes it is crucial for the timber industry to have certainty.</p> <p>"It's crucial in particular for the whole of the Gippsland forest timber industry... that's where we need the certainty. If we don't have the certainty we won't get the investment, we lose all the jobs.</p> <p>Mr Tyler said the timber industry concern was highlighted by Morwell electorate independent candidate Brad Platschinda.</p> <p>"Brad Platschinda, who's in the timber industry, has chosen to stand against the Labor Party," Mr Tyler said.</p> <p>"We've got probably 1200 jobs out at the mill that rely on certainty of timber. Frankly I think even this sort of level of infrastructure could be at risk if there's not certainty."</p> <p>(article continues)</p>	<p><b>Policy good for Gippsland</b> <b>Latrobe Valley Express</b> <b>14 Nov 2002 pg 5</b> <b>Renee Kurowski</b></p> <p>THE Liberal Party's forestry policy has won strong backing from local candidates Peter Tyler (GippslandProvince), Diane Blackwood (Morwell) and Karen Stoll (Narracan).</p> <p>Announced by Liberal Leader Robert Doyle at the weekend, the candidates claimed the policy underlined the party's commitment to a long term and sustainable Victorian forestry industry, based on the harvest of both regrowth forest and plantation timber.</p> <p>Ms Blackwood and her husband Chris run a logging haulage company in Traralgon which she claims has already been affected by the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) through increased protection of conservation reserves in Gippsland.</p> <p>It's scary because it's affecting us greatly - there's no planning for the future," Ms Blackwood said. "A Liberal Government would provide stability and basis for the timber industry in this area."</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>"Otway and Wombat have already been significantly affected; what stops Erica and Rawson from being next?" Ms Blackwood asked.</p> <p>(article continues)</p>
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### 3. Loggers and Liberals declare success in Morwell. Bracks destroys Liberals everywhere else.

The native forest logging industry declares their campaign a success in Morwell despite the fact every sitting Liberal in the Geelong region who supported logging in the Otways under the Regional Forest Agreement was wiped out.

See case study: [Liberals lose Bellarine and South Barwon](#).

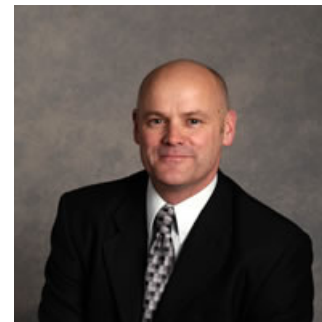
Mr Platschinda secured 15% of the primary vote but still failed to beat the ALP candidate Brendan Jenkins.

<p>In <i>The Age</i> Mr Platschinda made public comment regarding the reasons he stood as a candidate in Morwell. The <i>Age</i> reported that Morwell is the home to two large timber and paper companies (Australian Paper) and that Platschinda stand in Morwell was a protest over the Otways policies and a "long term warning" over jobs "should the government continue to limit logging".</p> <p><b>Timber worker undercuts Labor swing</b> <b>The Age. 3/12/02, Page 7.</b> <b>Paul Robinson</b> <b>Workplace Editor</b></p> <p>An Independent timber worker has sent a scare through the red-ribbon ALP seat of Morwell, recording almost 15 percent of the primary vote.</p> <p>Brad Platschinda, backed by the militant Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union, stood in the traditional Labor stronghold as a protest against the Bracks Government's forestry policies.</p> <p>While the ALP achieved an 8 per cent swing across the state, voters in Morwell cut more than 5 percent from the party's vote after the retirement of front bencher Keith Hamilton.</p> <p>Although many electorates embraced the Greens, Mr Platschinda and the CFMEU rode a wave of local and anti-environment pro-jobs sentiment after the government foreshadowed bans on logging in the Otway and the Goolengook State Forest.</p> <p>Morwell is the home of two large timber and paper companies that employ more than 1300 people in the Latrobe Valley. Angry at the government's policy of appeasement to the Greens, the CFMEU spent heavily on the Platschinda campaign winning almost 4500 primary votes for its investment. The campaign which included two weeks of advertisements on local television and radio and in newspapers, served as a strident long-term warning on jobs to the Labor Party.</p> <p>Mr Platschinda said yesterday the sharp swing away from Labor indicated the depth of feeling in Morwell about the potential loss of timber jobs should the government continue to limit logging.</p> <p>"If both of the major timber companies in this areas went down, much of the areas would collapse," he said. "I think many people were disillusioned that the ALP were prepared to throw hundreds of jobs away in an area devastated by unemployment."</p> <p>ALP campaign director David Feeney yesterday remained confident of retaining the seat. "The last time I looked, it appeared to be ours," he said.</p>	<p>The Liberal "logging contractor" candidate for Morwell also warned there would be a "big fight" if there was any moves to stop logging in the Gippsland region.</p> <p><b>Morwell backlash</b> <b>Labour should hold on but seat will be very marginal</b></p> <p><b>Latrobe Valley Express</b> <b>2 Dec Nov 2002, Page 1 &amp; 4.</b> <b>By Lynne Smith and Neil Hickey</b></p> <p>IN defiance of a huge state wide swing to Labor, the seat of Morwell suffered a swing of around seven per cent against ALP candidate Brendan Jenkins in Saturday's state election.</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>Mr Platschinda, meanwhile, said the result exceeded his expectations. He said an aggressive advertising campaign had played a large role in his healthy vote but revealed dozens of timber workers had dipped into their own pockets to help out.</p> <p>Ms Blackwood described the vote as a win for the timber industry and a strong personal vote against Mr Jenkins.</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>Ms Blackwood conceded the big swing against the Liberal Party, locally and statewide, was a concern. "But now this (Morwell) is a very marginal seat, the union (CFMEU) achieved what they set out to do and that was to bring more focus to the area. Should they (the Bracks Government) decide to close logging in the Gippsland region, they'll be in for a big fight. They'll sacrifice the seat of Morwell for good."</p> <p>(article continues)</p>
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#### 4. Did Australian Paper funded the loggers "lavish" advertising campaign in Morwell?

A lot of money was spent on Mr Platschinda campaign that resulted in 15% or 4733 primary votes in the Morwell electorate in 2002.

So who did paid for the 'lavish' election campaign?



Brendan Jenkins elected ALP Member for Morwell (2002-2006), caught up in the politics of the Otways debate.

<p>On the 2 December, just after the election results were becoming clear, winning ALP candidate Mr Jenkins described Mr Platschinda advertising campaign as "lavish" and asked the question, where did the money come from?</p> <p><b>Jenkins vows he will govern for all voters</b> <b>Latrobe Valley Express</b> <b>2 Dec Nov 2002 page 5.</b> <b>Neil Hickey</b></p> <p>LIKELY new Labor MLA for Morwell Brendan Jenkins has vowed to overhaul his combative style after Labor's comfortable margin in the Latrobe Valley seat was decimated on Saturday night.</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>However Mr Jenkins said Mr Platschinda's impressive result had centred on a negative and lavish advertising campaign.</p> <p>Mr Platschinda's advertising campaign included a string of full page ads in The Express and several blanket mail-outs to householders in the electorate.</p> <p>Other candidates had also expressed concern at Mr Platschinda's use of a Tullamarine printing company for his material, despite the independent running a campaign calling for local jobs to be protected.</p> <p>"He spent more on his advertising than all the other candidates combined," Mr Jenkins said.</p> <p>"You have to ask the question where did all the funding come from? I know I'm asking that question. His campaign had a negative effect and that's something we'll have to overcome."</p> <p>(article continues)</p>	<p>On the same day, Mr Platschinda acknowledged a lot of money was spent, and offered an explanation that his campaign was funded out of the pockets of workers.</p> <p><b>Independent may run again</b> <b>Latrobe Valley Express</b> <b>2 Dec Nov 2002 page 5</b> <b>Neil Hickey</b></p> <p>INDEPENDENT candidate Brad Platschinda will give serious consideration to standing again for the now marginal seat of Morwell after attracting a massive slice of the vote in the weekend's election. (Note: Mr Platschinda never ran in the 2006 Vic State election.)</p> <p>Mr Platschinda –running for a state seat for the first time - attracted almost 15 per cent of the primary vote with his pro-timber industry campaign.</p> <p>(article continues)</p> <p>Mr Platschinda agreed an aggressive advertising campaign had played a large role in his healthy vote, but revealed dozens of timber workers had dipped into their own pockets to help out. "I think it had a fair bit to do with it. We only had two and a half weeks so we had to go pretty hard regarding that," he said of his advertising.</p> <p>"With regards to who was bankrolling us, we had an overwhelming response from timber workers around the state. Timber workers were putting in the equivalent of two weeks pay just to help out. It's their jobs, their livelihood. I had support from all over the state wishing me well."</p> <p>And he predicted the result would make the major parties pay more attention to the timber industry in the future.</p> <p>"I guess what it means is timber workers jobs do mean something to a vast proportion of the community even more than the major parties," he said.</p> <p>"The amount of support and the efforts from some of the people around me. They've put their lives on hold, some of them. It's amazing when an industry has its back against the wall how many people will step up and fight. It's the true spirit of Aussie people. It's a credit to timber workers across the state."</p>
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### Big thanks to Australian Paper 'pulp and paper and timber workers'.

<p>In the next edition of the Express (5th December), Mr Platschinda made a public statement that he had stood as an independent to represent the interests of the "industry".</p> <p><b>Candidate defends use of Melbourne company</b> <b>Latrobe Valley Express</b> <b>5 December 2002, page 5.</b> <b>Neil Hickey</b></p> <p>THE success story in Morwell at last weekend's election, independent candidate Brad Platschinda, has defended his use of a Melbourne printing company during his election campaign.</p> <p>Mr Platschinda had come under fire from many of his opponents for his lavish advertising campaign, which included full page newspaper advertisements and several blanket mail-outs to householders.</p> <p>Much of that promotional material was printed by a company in Tullamarine, which critics argued was hypocritical considering Mr Platschinda's campaign was centred on securing local jobs.</p> <p>But Mr Platschinda said the timeline of the election left him with no other choice.</p> <p>"The reason we used the company at Tullamarine was because we started the campaign so late, and a few of the local printers were in no form or shape to get the sheer volume out that we needed," he said.</p>	<p>The Express on the 5th December 2002 also contained a full page advertisement thanking the "pulp and paper and timber workers" for voting for Mr Platschinda.</p> <p>The 'pulp and paper and timber workers' are essentially people who work directly or indirectly for Australian Paper. They include people who work at the pulp and paper mill and people who log and cart woodchip logs to the Australian Paper mill.</p> <p>Australian Paper has a long history of financing its employees to run political campaigns against community groups who oppose or may threaten Australian Paper commercial interests. See <a href="#">ABC TV Four Corners "The A Team"</a>.</p> <p>So which wealthy loggers dipped onto their pockets after the election was over to pay for yet another full page advertisement?</p>
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"I'm not sure who we tried, but it was two or three (printers) locally. I actually made the point to a couple of people in the office in the week they came out: no local company could do it in such a short time.

"One we tried said they couldn't get it done until Monday (the Monday after the election). Obviously that wasn't going to work."

Meanwhile, Mr Platschinda was this week refusing to concede defeat although admitted he was a "horribly long shot".

"I'd probably be a 10,000 to one shot. (National Party candidate) Jenny (Hammett) is probably in the best position (if anyone is going to topple Brendan Jenkins)."

But he was otherwise pleased with his performance he polled almost 15 per cent of the primary vote – the profile his campaign gave the timber industry and local jobs, and with Morwell returning to marginal status.


"It gets most of the major parties looking at the area," he said of the swing against Labor.

"I'm pretty happy. I've had some phone calls from other workers and from bosses, even. It brought our issues on to the map. At the end of the day I was never in it for myself - I made that really clear - I was in it for the industry."

The Express, Thursday, 5 December, 2002 - Page 17

ADVERTISEMENT

# Brad Platschinda



Would like to thank the many people who voted for him, especially the pulp and paper and timber workers

## VOTE FOR AN INDEPENDENT

**Let's keep Morwell marginal.**

Authorised: Peter Kelly, 19 Madden Street, Morwell, 3840.

This full page thank you advertisement was run on the 5th of December 2002, after the State election. Who paid for this advertisement?

#### 5. Other trade unions did not support Forestry Union's candidate.

Other trade unions made a public statement on the 5th December distancing themselves from the forestry unions Morwell electorate campaign.

#### Union angry at claims Latrobe Valley Express 5 Dec Nov 2002, page 5.

CFMEU state organiser John Parker yesterday distanced the union from the successful campaign of Morwell independent candidate Brad Platschinda. Mr Parker said the candidate's claims he had broad union support were untrue. "He doesn't have the support of the construction division and FEDFA and I would doubt he had the support of the miners," Mr Parker said. "Certainly we're pretty rotable he gave preferences to the National Party and Liberal Parties...some of our members are pretty rotable."

## Appendix IV

### The RFA was a public relations exercise.

One only has to look at the language used by the RFA process to see how it is an attempt to brainwash the broader community into thinking that the forests are protected.

For example:

**Regional Forest Agreement** - or was it a Regional Forest Disagreement? The name '*Regional Forest Agreement*' implies that a concurrence of opinion between all parties was reached. In fact, the process and terms of reference were controlled and dictated by woodchipping companies and bureaucrats with a self interest in clearfell logging. For more on [clearfell logging](#) see:

<http://www.oren.org.au/logging/clearfell.htm>

### Comprehensive Adequate Representative (CAR) Reserve System.

Comprehensive and adequate by who's definition? Again, just because a title says "*adequate*" does not mean that it actually is.

The names and titles used by the RFA process are useful to incorporate woodchipping companies in their own public relation campaigns. These names and titles make it easier for big business to promote the idea that there is an '*agreement*' on how to manage forests and that these forest have '*adequate*' protection while profits are maximised from woodchips sourced from clearfell logged native forests.

The foolish way that bureaucrats went about using 'slogans' to promote concepts ultimately backfired when the West RFA was cancelled in 2002.

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<sup>1</sup> The circumstances of this policy shift are articulated in detail in Appendix 1 and at: <http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/westrfadead.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Clauses 5, 7, 19 and all the clauses within Part 3

<sup>3</sup> See section 2 of this submission for more details

<sup>4</sup> See Victorian Government Hansard, 5 October 2004, Timber Industry: Regional Forest Agreements

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/libhansardsept.htm>

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix III of this submission or See <http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/morwell.htm>

<sup>7</sup> See [http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/rfa\\_not\\_contract.html](http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/rfa_not_contract.html)

<sup>8</sup> Also see Appendix I.

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <http://www.oren.org.au/logging/who/vafi.htm>

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.vafi.org.au/documents/AllenReportMarch06.pdf>  
<http://www.oren.org.au/reports/AllenReportMarch06.pdf>



<sup>11</sup> <http://www.theage.com.au/business/timber-industry-calls-for-sustainable-access-200806222v11.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.theage.com.au/business/victoria-plans-new-strategy-on-timber-200808033pd8.html>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Age\\_june06.htm](http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Age_june06.htm)

<sup>14</sup> See [http://www.oren.org.au/reports/NAFI\\_27nov02.pdf](http://www.oren.org.au/reports/NAFI_27nov02.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> See [http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Liberals/lib\\_federal2002.htm](http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Liberals/lib_federal2002.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Front page, Geelong Advertiser, 7 November 2002. .

<sup>17</sup> See Section 5 of this submission

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.veac.vic.gov.au/angahookotway.htm>

<sup>19</sup> See more detail in section 6 of this submission. Also, *Cheap as Chips. A history of Campaigns to save Victoria's Native Forests*. 2006 Chapter seven "A Wilderness Society Perspective".

<sup>20</sup> Victorian Parliament Hansard 12 June 2002.

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.oren.org.au/reports/VAFI%20Annual%20Report\\_7.pdf](http://www.oren.org.au/reports/VAFI%20Annual%20Report_7.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix I of this submission.

<sup>23</sup> See [http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Liberals/lib\\_federal2002.htm#1](http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Liberals/lib_federal2002.htm#1)

<sup>24</sup> See <http://www.theage.com.au/national/75000-hectares-to-be-set-aside-for-the-wild-20080628-2yk3.html>

Government press release:

[http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/domino/Web\\_Notes/newmedia.nsf/b0222c68d27626e2ca2%20%2056c8c001a3d2d/73a0326de9d5316fca257478007a9ff9!OpenDocument](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/newmedia.nsf/b0222c68d27626e2ca2%20%2056c8c001a3d2d/73a0326de9d5316fca257478007a9ff9!OpenDocument)

<sup>25</sup> See section 3

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.daff.gov.au/rfa/regions/vic-west>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.daff.gov.au/rfa/regions/qld>

<sup>28</sup> AFFA Press Release: 21 February 2002.

[http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Liberals/lib\\_federal2002.htm#1](http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Liberals/lib_federal2002.htm#1)

<sup>29</sup> Address to the Victorian Association of Forest Industries Dinner Melbourne, Australia, 22 November, 2002, [http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Liberals/lib\\_federal2002.htm#3](http://www.oren.org.au/campaign/politics/Liberals/lib_federal2002.htm#3)

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix II of this submission

<sup>31</sup> Source: West RFA March 2000.

<sup>32</sup> See Appendix II of this submission.

<sup>33</sup> See Section 3 above.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix II of this submission

<sup>35</sup> See 1997 peak environment groups press release:

[http://www.oren.org.au/reports/PR97\\_CH\\_RFA.pdf](http://www.oren.org.au/reports/PR97_CH_RFA.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Central Highlands Regional Forest Agreement, Directions Report, Sept 1997, page 42

<sup>37</sup> Economic assessment of selected forest uses in the Central Highlands of Victoria: Final report, March 1998 (page1)

<sup>38</sup>

<http://www.ces.vic.gov.au/CES/wcmn301.nsf/childdocs/E6B87D4214877024CA256F250028E4A7?open>

<sup>39</sup> See Securing Our Water Future Together - Victorian Government White Paper  
[http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/12783/Chptr2.pdf](http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/12783/Chptr2.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> See <http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/environment/harvesting-in-catchments>.

<sup>41</sup> Potential impacts of forest management on streamflow in Melbourne's water supply catchments. Summary report. May 2008. Russell Mein. See Executive Summary and page 18.  
[http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/12711/Summaryandforestmanagementimpacts.pdf](http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/12711/Summaryandforestmanagementimpacts.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> See <http://melbournecatchments.org/>

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix III of this submission

<sup>44</sup> See the Allen Consulting Report. Section 5.2 Resource security - Harvesting in water catchments page 50 Victoria's Forest Industries - An Economic Impact Assessment. March 2006. Report to the Victorian Association of Forest Industries. <http://www.vafi.org.au/documents/AllenReportMarch06.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Peter F Morgan, 1997 Contested Native Forests A Theoretical and Empirical Study, Phd dissertation.

<sup>46</sup> Cheap as Chips. A history of Campaigns to save Victoria's Native Forests. 2006, p 167.

<sup>47</sup> Feral greens will fail. Opinion by Barry Cohen. Herald Sun. 9 October 1995. The enemy in green. Opinion Herald Sun 10 October 1995

<sup>48</sup> Bruce V. Shaw (1997) Was the Wilderness Society tricked into supporting the Coalition at the 1996 Federal election, AQ Vol 69, No. 2

<sup>49</sup> Note: This is not being judgmental, just reporting the facts. Also I am not saying that the conservation groups would have had anything to contribute to the RFA process, one can only assume that they might have had something to contribute.

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.oren.org.au/reports/PR97\\_CH\\_RFA.pdf](http://www.oren.org.au/reports/PR97_CH_RFA.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.wilderness.org.au/articles/19990421\\_mr](http://www.wilderness.org.au/articles/19990421_mr)

<sup>52</sup> Page 20, Draft RFA Review

<sup>53</sup> Pages 12 and 15.

<sup>54</sup> Pages 11, 37

<sup>55</sup> Victorian Parliament Hansard, 5 October 2004, Page 594

<sup>56</sup> See section 9.7 Other priorities identified under RFA, Baw Baw Frog page 132

<sup>57</sup> Page 43, Draft RFA review.

<sup>58</sup> Victorian Parliament Hansard, 9 December 2009 Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East).

<sup>59</sup> Starting at page 43 of the Draft RFA Review

<sup>60</sup> VicForests VicForests2007 Annual Report; and MWCN Submission to Timber Industry Strategy for Victoria (2009) 14.  
[http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/5430/Melbourne\\_Water\\_Catchment\\_Network.pdf](http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/5430/Melbourne_Water_Catchment_Network.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Waugh, G. (1986) The Future of the Victorian Hardwood Sawmilling Industry, paper prepared for the Lands Conservation Council, February. Waugh, G. (1988a) Low Quality Eucalypt Sawlog Study: Andrews Sawmill-Newmerella, Preliminary Report, CSIRO, confidential. Waugh, G. (1988b) Relative economics of splitting or sawing of low-quality pulpwood logs at Andrews Newmerella Sawmill, 9 December, CSIRO, confidential. Waugh, G. (1989) Relative economics of splitting or sawing of low-quality pulpwood logs at Andrews Newmerella Sawmill, Revised report, 5 February, CSIRO, confidential. Waugh, G. (1991a) VAUS WOOD PRODUCT EVALUATION: FINAL PROJECT REPORT, A collaborative research project jointly funded by APM Forests P/L and T J Andrews Sawmills, CSIRO, February. Waugh, G. (1991b) 'Adding Value to Old-Growth Eucalypt Forests', paper prepared for the Second Australian and New Zealand Institutes of Foresters Conference, Christchurch.

<sup>62</sup> Peter F Morgan, 1997 Contested Native Forests A Theoretical and Empirical Study, Phd dissertation.

<sup>63</sup> Ian Watson, Fighting over the Forests (1990), The Mill Modernisations, page 2.

<sup>64</sup> RFA Review, page 60.