

# THE FUTURE OF YOUR FORESTS

*A Victorian RFA Update - July 1999*

**Regional Forest Agreements between the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments will be finalised in 1999. This flyer outlines the RFA timetable for the latter half of the year and how you can contribute to outcomes in the final Victorian agreements for the Gippsland and West regions.**

## **The RFA process in Victoria**

The RFA process has been in full swing in Victoria since 1996. In February 1997 the East Gippsland region became the first in Australia to be covered by an RFA, followed by the Central Highlands region in March 1998. The public submissions period for the North-East region ended at the end of May 1999 and the RFA is expected to be signed in July.

Work on the Gippsland and West RFAs has been under way for some time. Hundreds of people representing State and regional conservation, industry and community organisations, as well as local residents, participated in public meetings throughout both regions to launch the process.

Since then they have contributed their local knowledge and expertise to numerous projects for the Comprehensive Regional Assessments (CRAs). These projects provide the information base for the Agreements and give us more and better knowledge than ever before about our native forest estate.

Both governments are committed to meeting the national deadline for finalising RFAs by 31 December 1999. Most of the necessary data has been collected through flora and fauna surveys, old-growth forest and disturbance mapping, social assessment workshops and surveys and collection of economic data.

## **What happens now?**

The next phase of the RFA process in both the West and Gippsland regions will be the publication of the CRA reports. In the West, most of the assessments will be published in July, with assessment reports for Gippsland coming out in August. As with other regions, copies of the CRA report will be available to all interested stakeholders, with technical information available on request or on the internet. There will be meetings in the region so that governments have feedback on the CRA report and issues raised before developing a Directions Report.

The Directions Reports for the West (estimated publication in October with some additional biodiversity and old-growth information in late August or early September) and for Gippsland (expected to be available in early November) will outline possible approaches to an RFA. During a four-week public comment period governments will be holding more regional public meetings and calling for written submissions on the report's suggestions. Public submissions will be considered as governments negotiate the RFAs. Both are scheduled for signing by mid-December 1999.

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