

# Possums Not Paper - FACT SHEET

## ▲ What is native forest logging and who is responsible?

Native forest logging is logging of native forests on public land, designated as State Forest. VicForests is a government business enterprise that is responsible for managing logging in State Forest. Logging occurs in designated logging areas known as coupes. These coupes are selected by VicForests.

Let's be clear – native forest logging is industrial clear-felling where every tree and plant in a coupe is flattened and removed. The remaining "waste" stumps and undergrowth are then burnt, to facilitate re-growth.

## ▲ So, what happens to native forest logs after they are logged?

In 2012, 87.6% of trees harvested from Victorian forests went towards paper production and woodchips, 4.1% burning for heat. While only 8.3% of the Victorian native forests logging were used for higher value building products, like pallets, palings, timber veneers and furniture.

## ▲ What are the environmental consequences of logging native forests?

Native forest logging directly leads to:

- loss of biodiversity and extinction of species;
- a risk of contamination of water supply and impact on quantity of water captured;
- more carbon emissions in the atmosphere due to loss of large trees;
- increased fire risk in some areas.

## ▲ What is a Leadbeater's Possum and how many exist?

The Leadbeater's Possum, sometimes called the Fairy Possum, has been the official Victorian faunal emblem since 1971 and is only found in the Central Highlands of Victoria's native forests, from Toolangi (near Kinglake) to Powelltown (near Warburton). It was thought extinct until it was rediscovered in Cambarville (near Marysville), in 1961.

The Leadbeater's Possum is listed as "critically endangered". An estimated 1500 survive in the wild and with 45% of their habitat, the Mountain Ash forests of Victoria's Central Highlands, destroyed in the 2009 fires. Scientists have declared that all logging in central highlands must cease to give the Leadbeaters' Possum a chance for survival.

## ▲ Are The Greens against all forms of logging?

No. The Greens policy calls for:

- an end to all clear-felling in native forests;
- a ban on the use of native forest wood for generating electricity;
- an end to the export of woodchips and whole logs from native forests;
- ending logging in high-conservation value forests and town water catchments.

## ▲ What are the alternatives to native forest logging?

Simply put, commercial plantations are the alternative. They would provide more jobs, while being better for the environment and the economy.

In 2012-13, 87% of all logs harvested in Australia were from commercial plantations, with only 17% from native forests. The transition from native forests to commercial plantations for our wood products needs is well underway.

## ▲ How many jobs are there in the Victorian native logging industry?

2011 Census data shows that 559 Victorians nominated "forestry and/or logging worker" as their occupation. VicForests own data from 2014 data revealed 485 native forest logging jobs.

Native forests are a finite resource, taking hundreds of years to develop, and destroyed after one clear felling. At the current rate, they will not be around for much longer while plantations will continue to provide jobs consistently into the future.

### ▲ How many jobs would plantations create?

Softwood plantations employ about three times as many employees per hectare compared with native forest logging operations. Hardwood plantations employ about the same number per hectare as native forest logging operations. A mix of hardwood and softwood plantations would produce more jobs than native forest logging, while remaining commercially viable.

### ▲ How much native forest is logged by VicForests?

An average of 5000 hectares per year was logged in the 2007-2013 years. If you were to measure this against the size of the MCG, VicForests logged around 2800 times the playing oval area every year in this period.

### ▲ How much profit does VicForests make?

VicForests financial reports show that since it was established in 2003/04, it has returned a miserly profit of \$12.4 million - that's an average of \$1.24 million per year. Of this, only a small portion of this profit has ever been returned to its owner, the Victorian Government in the form of a dividend. These figures alone show that if VicForests were a private enterprise, owned by shareholders, it would be a very poor investment indeed.

### ▲ How much does VicForests cost the Victorian taxpayer?

VicForests avoids a range of infrastructure and service costs that commercial plantations would otherwise have to fund. Payment for roads, fire management support, statutory fees and charges that would otherwise cost VicForests millions of dollars each year are avoided under its sweetheart arrangements with Government.

VicForests engages in debt write-offs with its customers, such doing special deals to help a Japanese-owned paper mill avoid \$10 million of debt. Government support of VicForests makes it harder for commercial plantations to compete on price, and keeps an unsustainable native forest logging sector going.

### ▲ What is illegal logging and have VicForests engaged in it?

As part of its obligations under the Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 VicForests is supposed to:

- undertake assessments of proposed logging sites in order to determine the existence of protected species and habitat; and
- establish exclusion zones around protected species, habitat, waterways.

Sadly, the current legal arrangements to support protection of high conservation value forests are regarded as completely inadequate, and not supported by many years of scientific research.

Citizen scientist groups are constantly discovering protected species and habitats that VicForests have not identified. There is a line of legal cases that have been brought by environmental groups to try to enforce legal protections in Victorian native forests. These cases have frequently become bogged down in technical disputes about legal uncertainties that are built into the law. On a number of occasions, the evidence needed to support claimed protected species destruction allegations has literally been destroyed.

### ▲ What are The Greens doing to ensure accountability of the logging industry?

The Greens are:

- Advocating for an end to native forest logging in Victoria, and the establishment of the Great Forest National Park.
- Challenging the Government's claims regarding the number of jobs linked to native forest logging.
- Exposing the level of Government support for VicForests.
- Calling for a full and transparent review of the Regional Forest Agreements, between Victoria and the Commonwealth.
- Calling for a full inquiry into VicForests.
- Encouraging a transition of native forest jobs to the plantation industry.

### ▲ What is the Great Forest National Park and why do we need it?

The Great Forest National Park would provide a multi-tiered parks system for bush users and bush lovers alike. It also happens to be the home of our Leadbeater's Possum. The Great Forest National Park would protect and maintain important ecosystem functions critical for our way of life. To see the park plan visit:

[www.greatforestnationalpark.com.au/park-plan](http://www.greatforestnationalpark.com.au/park-plan)