



19th December, 2016 – via email

Premier of Victoria

The Hon, Daniel Andrews MP

Level 1, 1 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, VIC 3002

CC: The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP – Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change

RE: East Gippsland's Regional Forest Agreement and the logging industry exemption from federal environment laws

Dear Premier Andrews,

Since the flawed Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) were signed 20 years ago, fires, climate change and markets have all combined to create a vastly different set of circumstances, threats and opportunities in Victoria's forests.

Please do not support the regressive move to extend the obsolete RFAs.

The RFAs exempt the logging industry from complying with the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

The industry is given special treatment by not having to refer planned logging operations for assessment and approval under the EPBC Act.

The exemption from the EPBC Act is based on state logging regulations protecting federally listed threatened species. However, for many Victorian forest-dependant species listed under the EPBC Act, there is very limited or no protections from logging under Victorian law.

The Greater Glider is an iconic Australian animal that has recently been listed as vulnerable to extinction under the EPBC Act. Very limited protections for Greater Gliders in East Gippsland were created over 20 years ago when the species was relatively common. These protections have failed. This is evidenced by a dramatic decline in the last 20 years, mainly due to extensive logging of habitat with very weak state based protections. In other regions in Victoria, the species has no protection from logging whatsoever.

The Greater Glider's decline shows how the RFAs have failed threatened species. Despite the Greater Glider's listing as vulnerable under the EPBC Act, the outdated state based protection in East Gippsland has not been reviewed and strengthened in light of its decline and listing as threatened under federal law.

Other industries need approval from the Commonwealth Environment Minister before taking an action that may significantly impact federally listed threatened species. Native forest logging does not. The result has been catastrophic for Victoria's forest dependant wildlife.

In February 2017 the East Gippsland Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) will expire. We respectfully request that you do not extend the East Gippsland RFA and instead ensure that logging is subject to the same environmental assessment and approval processes as any other industry under the EPBC Act.

Whilst the Victorian Government is examining options for the conservation of Victoria's forests and threatened species through the Forest Industry Taskforce, it would be irresponsible to extend or reinstate the failed and out-dated East Gippsland RFA. An extension would result in prolonging the special treatment the logging industry has exploited for 20 years.

This means more destruction of habitat for federally listed threatened species at a critical time when important steps to conserve native forests and wildlife need to be taken.

Yours sincerely,

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