



## MEDIA RELEASE

### VICTORIAN PARK PROPOSAL FAILS ON ALL FRONTS

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The Victorian Central Highlands Park proposal fails to meet the triple bottom principles for improved environmental, social and economic outcomes for the state of Victoria.

This was the message from Rob de Fegely, President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia, at a gathering of foresters in Canberra today.

“The Park proposal fails on environmental grounds because fire is the greatest threat to Leadbeater’s possum and changing tenure will not improve the protection of this species. If anything it will make them considerably more vulnerable due to the loss of skilled forest managers will result in poorer management and see a lack of specialist fire-fighting equipment that accompanies the State’s timber industry” said Mr de Fegely.

“The Park proposal fails on social grounds because it will close the State’s natural forest timber industry which could result in the loss of over 3000 jobs in rural and regional Victoria, areas where there are limited if any real opportunities for alternative employment” he adds.

And last but not least, “the Park proposal fails on economic grounds because there will be no substantial increase in economic activity as many of the activities that are said to arise from the proposal are already available.

The initial cost to Victorian government of compensation to the timber industry and its workers could be up to \$500 million and there will be ongoing welfare costs associated with displaced timber workers who will need help to adjust to their loss of employment.

I believe that there is good evidence that claims about the new Park generating a significant number of new employment opportunities will not materialise”.

“Many people do not know that over half of the forest area in Victoria is already in formal and informal reserves. Creating a National Park is a blunt an instrument and is likely to fail due to a lack of funds to manage the bushfire risk. Instead I urge Victorians to support the joint 13-step Action Plan for Leadbeater’s Possum developed by Parks Victoria, Zoos Victoria and VicForests. This innovative cross-agency plan represents a modern active and adaptive management approach to conservation and deserves support. It is this plan that will give Leadbeater’s Possum the greatest chance of survival”.

*The Institute of Foresters of Australia is apolitical and tenure neutral and our aim is to support professional forest managers across all of Australia’s 125 million hectares of forests. Our members work in National Parks and reserves, and multi-use forests that include production forests, plantations, agro-forests, water catchments and urban forests.*