



Media release

Multiple-use forests of more benefit than a new national park say forest scientists

Euan Ferguson, Victorian Chair of the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA), says there is no benefit in creating a 'Great Forest National Park' in Victoria's Central Highlands forests.

Mr Ferguson, said: 'Most of the region's forests are already contained in conservation and water catchment reserves. The existing balance between conservation and other land uses is appropriate and there is no need for more National Parks.'

'Adding more forest to existing reserves provides, at best, only marginal biodiversity benefit, while substantially damaging the region's \$537 million hardwood timber industry.

'There is no evidence that the associated employment loss would be recouped by growth in forest-based tourism. State Forest, on the other hand, allows the general public a variety of activities - many of which are not allowed in national parks.

'Leadbeater's Possum, is thriving in forest that includes regrowth as young as 10 to 20 years, as shown by recent Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning research.

'Around 70 per cent of the region's Mountain Ash forest, which is current or potential future Leadbeater's Possum habitat, is already permanently reserved from timber harvesting.

'In the Central Highlands, uncontrolled severe bushfire, not timber harvesting, is the greatest threat to forest biodiversity. Closing the regional timber industry, to create a 'Great Forest National Park' would result in the removal of forestry expertise and workforces, and the neglect of the road access network. This would reduce initial attack on bushfires and reduce fire suppression strategies, leading to greater risk of bushfires and severe environmental damage.

'Water supply protection is already a primary goal of forest management with most (88%) of Melbourne's water supply catchment is already permanently closed to any activity, including timber harvesting.

Mr Ferguson concluded that the current forest management arrangements reflect a diversity of stakeholder views and maximise social value. In contrast, the proposal for a 'Great Forest National Park' has not demonstrated optimum public benefit for Victorians, and should be rejected.

The IFA Position Paper on the proposed Great Forest National Park can be found at: <https://forestry.org.au/publications/ifa-position-on-the-proposed-great-forest-national-park-2>

Media contact:

The Institute of Foresters, Victorian Division

Mark Poynter, IFA Media Officer 0418 846 819

Euan Ferguson, IFA Victorian Division Chair 0408 840 035

Bob Gordon, IFA National President 0400 980 297