

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
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REVIEW TO PROTECT VICTORIA'S FORESTS, JOBS AND TIMBER INDUSTRY

The Victorian Government has commissioned a broad-ranging review to safeguard the Victorian Forestry Plan – and the regional jobs and environmental protections it will deliver.

The 30-year plan sets out a long-term and sustainable future for Victoria's forestry industry. As part of the plan announced last year, VicForests will extend existing timber supply agreements until 2024, after which native timber supply will be stepped down before ending in 2030. Logging of old-growth forests is now banned.

The plan includes immediate exemptions from logging for 96,000 hectares of forest across Victoria to protect the future of the Greater Glider alongside the Leadbeater's Possum and more than 35 other threatened species.

Opal Australian Paper will also be supported to transition to a full plantation-based supply, ensuring it operates until at least 2050 – providing support to its almost 1,000-strong workforce and stability to its customers.

The plan is backed by \$120 million in industry support – including re-employment and re-training services for impacted workers, and funding for community projects that support local businesses and help create local jobs.

However, recent legal challenges have highlighted a range of issues that put the future of the plan at risk, by potentially limiting the ability of VicForests to deliver on the supply commitments set out in it.

The Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014 (the Code), is a key instrument containing important rules that govern timber harvesting and was introduced by the previous Liberal-National Government. While the Code has been in operation there have been numerous legal challenges and uncertainty for conservationists and the forestry industry about their operating environment.

A clear, accurate and enforceable Code is needed, supported by strong enforcement powers for Victoria's Conservation Regulator.

As a result, the Government has initiated a review of the Code to:

- minimise the risk to short-term supply obligations arising from third-party litigation
- ensure it remains fit for purpose and facilitates the implementation of the Victorian Forestry Plan
- strengthen the regulatory powers available to the Conservation Regulator
- identify regulatory reforms informed by the 2019-20 bushfires.

The review's work will inform the upcoming comprehensive review of the Code required under Victoria's Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs).

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"A clear, accurate and enforceable Code is vital to protecting our forests – that's why this review is so important."

"We are determined to deliver on our plan to end native timber logging by the end of the decade."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

"This review will help us protect the Victorian Forestry Plan and the workers and communities it supports."

"Regional jobs are more important than ever right now – we can't let outdated regulation put them at risk."

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