

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Suburban Development



Getting Things Done.
Making Things Fair.

Tuesday, 27 March, 2018

CERTAINTY FOR WORKERS AND THE FUTURE OF OUR FORESTS

The Andrews Labor Government is modernising the state's Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) to support jobs and improve the long-term management of Victoria's forests.

The Labor Government announced today that the East Gippsland, Central Highlands and North East RFAs will be extended until 2020, when the West Victoria RFA and Gippsland RFAs are due to expire.

The two-year extension will provide certainty for current timber harvesting operations, and the workers they support.

The extension will also provide time for extensive consultation with scientific bodies, industry and the community to modernise the state's RFA framework and better manage Victoria's forests.

At the same time, the Labor Government announced it will provide immediate protection to approximately 2,500 hectares of high environmental-value forest in and around the Kuark Forest.

About half this area is old growth forest and provides essential habitat for threatened species, including the greater glider.

In addition, the Labor Government will protect all large, old trees greater than two-and-a-half metres in diameter across Victoria.

A program of landscape, and pre-harvest surveys will also be introduced, to provide greater operational certainty to VicForests and improve the management and protection of threatened species in timber harvesting coupes.

RFAs are agreements between the Federal Government and states that seek to balance economic, social and environmental values of forests.

Victoria's RFAs were developed in the 1990s. Since then, there have since been major advances in forest science since, including the role forests play in water security and the emerging impacts of climate change, and a greater recognition of the rights of Traditional Owners.

The Labor Government will now engage with Victorian communities – including Traditional Owners and industry – to ensure the next set of RFAs provide for the long-term sustainable management of Victoria's forests.

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

"We're providing certainty for workers, while we protect Victoria's forests and modernise the way they are managed."

"Our RFAs are more than 20 years old, and don't reflect modern forest science or the needs of local communities – that's why it's so important to modernise these agreements and get them right."

"This is about protecting more old growth forests like the Kuark Forest and protecting threatened species so future generations can appreciate them."

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