

STATEMENT

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's Central West Investigation Draft Proposals Paper

VicForests welcomes the release of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC) Central West Investigation Draft Proposals Paper.

The VEAC report provides an important opportunity for public debate around the conservation, use and sustainability of public forests and reserves in central west Victoria.

Through its Community Forestry program, VicForests undertakes operations in many areas reviewed by the VEAC investigation including Mount Cole, Mount Lonarch, The Wombat and Wellsford State forests and the Pyrenees ranges.

The vast majority of VicForests' operations under its Community Forestry program use low-intensity harvesting. VicForests also plays a key role in conservation, biodiversity and disease, pest and fire management within the areas of its operations.

VicForests' Community Forestry program supports locally-sourced timber to produce specialised products including furniture, building supplies and even high-end musical instruments. Use of these products is community and demand-driven and provides an important source of employment in a number of small, regional communities.

The Community Forestry program also produces significant volumes of firewood to be used for house heating which is relied upon by many households in regional Victoria.

The report proposes a significant change to the landscape of national parks and reserves across central west Victoria.

The native timber industry is one of the most strictly regulated industries across Victoria. While there is 7.1 million hectares of public forests located across the state, around 94 per cent of this is protected and will never be harvested under existing arrangements.

VicForests is considering the proposals put forward and will provide further comment to VEAC during the formal submissions period.

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