

Media statement



23 May 2023

Victoria takes step toward becoming nature-positive with early exit from native forest logging

The Victorian Government today announced that it will exit native forest logging on 1 January 2024, six years ahead of the previous planned end date.

The Biodiversity Council welcomed the end of native forest logging in Victoria which it described as ‘highly unsustainable both ecologically and economically’, and flagged that active management of forests will be needed to heal damage, manage fire, and stem the massive impacts of invasive species.

The Biodiversity Council brings together leading experts, including Indigenous knowledge holders, to raise awareness of Australia’s biodiversity crisis and to promote evidence-based solutions.

Biodiversity Councillor Professor David Lindenmayer from The Australian National University is a forest ecologist who has been conducting ecological monitoring and research in the wet forests of Victoria for nearly 40 years.

“This early exit is good for the forest and for threatened species, especially animals that depend on big old hollow-bearing trees to den or breed like the Leadbeaters possum, greater glider and sooty owl.

“It is also a great decision for the economy and the climate and shows that the Victorian Government is serious about climate change.

“The cessation of logging is equivalent to preventing emissions from 730 000 cars every year. This means Victoria and Australia have a far greater chance of meeting emission reduction targets.

“Victorian forests have suffered significant damage and degradation as a result of decades of clearfell logging. An urgent task will now be to start targeted forest restoration across the State,” Professor Lindenmayer said.

The Biodiversity Council is now calling for effective and active management of these forests to manage invasive species, fire risk, and improve outcomes for threatened species and rural communities and First Nations.

Biodiversity Councillor Professor Brendan Wintle from the University of Melbourne called for the Victorian Government to provide adequate funding for Victorian land management agencies and organisations, Indigenous groups, and biodiversity scientists to manage forests in partnership.

“We can’t just walk away from these forests now that logging is ending, they need to be actively managed to heal damage, reduce pressures from pest plants, animals, and damaging wildfire regimes and to maximise opportunities for communities and First Nations land managers.

“Huge public subsidies have been flowing to an unsustainable forest industry for 50 years. We hope to see that money reinvested in the care of these forests, ideally led by First Peoples forest managers and reinvigorated land management agencies.”

The Biodiversity Council has been established to connect Australian communities and decision-makers with knowledge and solutions to protect our unique biodiversity. It is founded by 11 universities including its host the University of Melbourne, with support from The Ian Potter Foundation, The Ross Trust, Trawalla Foundation, The Rendere Trust, Isaacson Davis Foundation, Coniston Charitable Trust and Angela Whitbread.



Media statement

23 May 2023



Biodiversity Councillor Dr Jack Pascoe from The University of Melbourne said that First Nations peoples have been actively managing these forests for thousands of years and there are huge lessons to be learned.

“We need Healthy Country and that needs people on Country doing thoughtful and wholistic land management with an eye to protecting biodiversity whilst ensuring that Cultural Practice is strong and that the transmission of Traditional Ecological Knowledge can continue,” Dr Pascoe said.

Biodiversity Councillor Rachel Lowry from WWF Australia said decisions like this build much needed hope and integrity into the nature positive agenda.

“This is an important step that Victoria urgently needs and that if executed with care has the potential to land wins not only for Victoria’s biodiversity, but also for tourism and the economy,” Ms Lowry said.

Professor Lindenmayer said that handled well, the rapid transition out of native forest logging will be jobs positive.

“A major workforce will be needed to build new tourism infrastructure, protect and then boost carbon stocks, tackle problems with exploding numbers of feral deer, and develop elite fire-fighting crews to make rural communities safe,” Professor Lindenmayer said.

Media support - Jaana Dielenberg, Communication Manager, jaana.dielenberg@unimelb.edu.au, +61 413 585 709