

Impending breaches of the Code of Forest Practice on the southwestern slopes of Mount Bullfight

RFPG

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VicForests intends to commence logging a group of four coupes on the southwestern slopes of Mt Bullfight in Spring 2018. The coupes in question are Mogwai (287-519-0016), Machine (287-519-0014), Gizmo (287-519-0015) and Gadget (287-519-0011). A map showing their location is [here](#).

[Clause 2.1.1.1.vi](#) of the 2014 Code of Practice for Timber Production requires that “Long-term forest management planning must ... minimise adverse visual impact in landscape sensitivity areas”.

‘landscape sensitivity area’ is defined in the Code as “areas identified as having a high scenic quality and visual sensitivity. They are usually areas that are readily visible from high-usage recreational facilities such as look-outs, walking tracks, tourist roads, or campsites.”

These coupes are only 2km from key lookouts at the northern end of the Lake Mountain part of the Yarra Ranges National Park.

In 2003 a successful campaign was run by The Central Highlands Alliance (TCHA) to prevent the logging of this same area, which is now enlarged via the addition of another 38ha coupe. The total area is now 122ha with VicForests’ Timber Release Plan indicating that around half is expected to be clearfelled.

The scenic impact of the proposed logging in 2003 is well set out in the [TCHA report](#). The death of snow gums surrounding the lookouts in the 2009 fire has further opened the view, making the impact of the proposed logging even starker. It will certainly ruin the views from Panorama Lookout and the Boundary Hut ruin for years to come. I attach two pictures of the area of coupe location taken this week from Panorama Lookout, as well as a sign at the lookout showing the view of Mt Bullfight that largely coincides with the boundary of the 4-coupe aggregate.

In view of the popularity of Lake Mountain, and this lookout in particular, and the fact that this is one of the few views from the mountain not looking onto a fire-killed landscape, these four coupes should not be logged since no amount of boundary adjustments can allow them to meet, the relevant standard in the Code, being [MSP clause 5.3.1.6\(a\)](#).

Logging these coupes would breach the biodiversity protection provisions of the Code, in particular clauses [2.2.2.2](#) and [2.2.2.4](#).

Clause [2.2.2.2](#) would be breached given the extent of remnant old-growth in this area (see [interim biodiversity map prepared by VicForests](#)) and the considerable area of old growth ash not far away in the Cambarville vicinity that was killed in 2009.

Clause [2.2.2.4](#) would be breached for two reasons, firstly because the access road to these coupes is very narrow and winds through a large area of rainforest that will very likely be adversely impacted by the roadworks needs to carry the considerable log truck traffic and secondly because the logging will liberate the blackberries in the area which will then extend across the adjoining Mt Bullfight conservation reserve. This area of the Royston River headwaters is already heavily impacted by blackberries due to past logging and if the area’s biodiversity is to be safeguarded, no further logging should occur in the Royston River headwaters.