

Direct Action peaks on International Day of Forests

It was fitting that the forest action group achieved their most daring and significant win to date, on the International Day of Forests _ Wed 21 March.

When the loggers arrived at Barjarg Flat at 6.30 am they were greeted by a group of direct action campaigners onsite, dressed in safety gear – hard hats, Vis vests and boots. Looking upwards the contractors were dumbstruck to see the amazing vision of someone attached to the top of a 15m pole; with the pole tethered and held securely by ropes attached to logging machinery and trees. The person at the top of the pole became fondly referred to as ‘possum’.

At the base of the pole, the group engaged in discussion with one of the contractors about the nuts and bolts issues driving their campaign to stop the logging. Some spoke of threatened species, global warming, lack of economic justification and protection of a local asset. The contractor was asked ‘Don’t you care about threatened species?’ To which he surprisingly replied that he did. A spirit of genuine engagement was initiated whenever the opportunity arose and any angry outbursts from contractors were mostly ignored.



The contractors called in one of the truck drivers who arrived in his ute and two VicForests staff from Alexandra who adopted authoritarian roles in trying to isolate and restrict access to the people who remained inside the coupe. Others arrived including DELWP staff to conduct site work. Meanwhile many phone calls were made by contractors and VicForests to call in legitimate authorities who could resolve the dispute by removing possum from the pole, presumable police search and rescue. VicForests agreed that no action could be taken that would risk the safety of possum or the other protestors inside the coupe. Although threats were made that arrests would be made before the day was finished, the only law and order presence was a police helicopter that flew over the site then disappeared.

Around 9.30 a support group of protestors arrived to reinforce the cause on the road outside the logging coupe. Some brought coffee and cake to revive the early shift crew. The new wave of protestors reinforced the key idea that this local community will not stand aside while the government endorses senseless destruction of their forest.