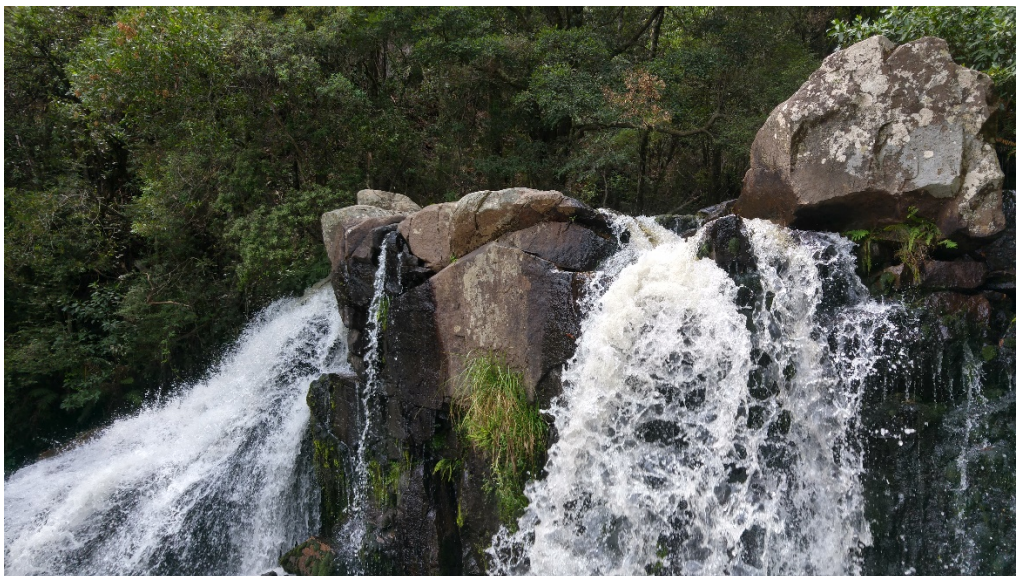




# Rubicon Forest Protection Group Inc

“... to protect and promote the values of the  
Rubicon Forest”

Annual Report 2018-19



## Welcome

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Annual Report for 2019-20 of the Rubicon Forest Protection Group Inc., in which we report on what we do and why<sup>1</sup>.

The Rubicon Forest Protection Group recognises the Rubicon Forest and Murrindindi as the traditional lands of the Taungurung people and that sovereignty was never ceded. We appreciate Taungurung stewardship of these lands, including the forests, over many millennia past and into the present and future. We remember with respect and affection Uncle Roy Patterson of Taggerty, a senior Taungurung man who was also one of the founders of our group.

If you agree with our purpose and strategies please join us (see last page of this report) or continue to work along side us. If you are not sure, please review the material presented in this report, and on our website ([www.rubiconforest.org](http://www.rubiconforest.org)), and talk with us, in person, on Facebook, or perhaps write to [info@rubiconforest.org](mailto:info@rubiconforest.org).

Together we can save and restore this beautiful forest.

Ken Deacon, Convenor  
1 July 2019

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1. If you are reading a hard copy of this report please note that the PDF version (with active links) is online at: [rubiconforest.org/about](http://rubiconforest.org/about).

## Purpose

The Rubicon Forest Protection Group Inc (RFPG) brings together members of the Murrindindi community, and beyond, who are concerned about the future of the Rubicon Forest.

The mission of the Rubicon Forest Protection Group Inc (RFPG) is to protect and promote the values of the Rubicon Forest. These values include biodiversity, recreation, culture and spirit, tourism, environmental services and the capacity for wood production.

## The threat

The Rubicon Forest is under threat from unsustainable logging, increasing bushfire risk, and from climate change.

Figure 1 shows the extent of the logging over the last 40 years, intensified since the fires of 2009. See also our video, [100 years of logging](#).

The scale and intensity of logging is unsustainable, just in terms of wood production. Within a few years there will be a dramatic reduction in harvestable timber in the Rubicon Forest, the Central Highlands and native forests in Victoria. Simply because too much has been taken. (More on unsustainable logging [here](#).)

However, the extent and scale of the logging is also unsustainable in terms of biodiversity. The harvesting and regeneration practices of VicForests do not replace the rich understory ecosystems. The intensive harvesting not only removes habitat trees and degrades the ecosystem but completely skews the age class profile of the forest to an overwhelming preponderance of younger trees.

Reducing the complexity of a forest ecosystem reduces its resilience in the face of disturbance.

Victoria's native forests are facing an existential challenge in the form of global warming. The degradation of the forest ecosystems weakens the forest's capacity to respond to climate change. (More on loss of biodiversity and resilience [here](#).)

### Lack of balance

Large scale intensive logging degrades other values of the forest, in particular, recreation and tourism.

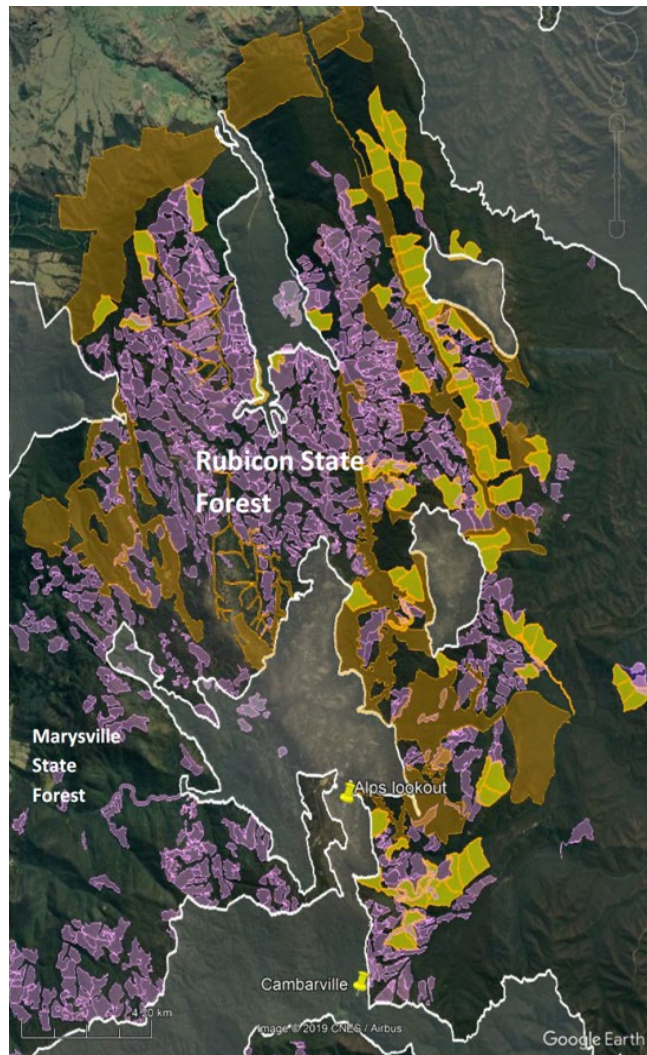


Figure 1. 40 years of logging in the Rubicon Forest  
Purple shows areas within coupes already logged; Light green shows coupes scheduled for logging; Brown shows special protection zones  
(Map prepared by Nick Legge on the basis of VF and DEWLP data)

The Rubicon Forest (still) has drives, walks and views of breath-taking beauty. Patches of old ash forest provide natural cathedrals for reflecting on the place of humans in the biosphere; the relations of humans to Mother Earth. (More on tourism potential [here](#).)

Tourism offers far greater employment opportunities and economic potential than contemporary high technology logging. Yet as coupe after coupe is razed the tourist potential is further diminished.

## Objectives

In the face of these threats, the RFPG has adopted the following objectives to guide our activities:

- An immediate moratorium on further logging in the Rubicon Forest.
- Reform of the regulatory framework governing the uses of the Forest to guarantee ecologically sustainable forest management and a balanced approach to the requirements of different uses of the forest.
- Investment in the development of forest tourism and protection and restoration of the recreational, spiritual and tourism values of the forest.
- Adoption of policies at state and federal levels to support a sustainable plantation industry to meet the needs of the domestic wood products market; investment in innovation in wood products manufacturing and alternative feedstock for paper manufacturing.

(RFPG's full policy package [here](#).)

## Strategy

The RFPG has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to pursue these objectives.

### Community engagement

RFPG aims to give voice to community members who are concerned about the extent of logging in the Rubicon Forest and surrounds. We aim to promote and contribute to the local community conversation about the threat to forest values other than timber production, including biodiversity, recreation, tourism and spiritual wellbeing.

We highlight the threat to the Forest arising from global warming and the possibility that ecosystem resilience is being reduced through the loss of biodiversity.

RFPG runs a program of forest tours for local community people and other interested folk from beyond the Murrindindi community.

### Research

RFPG monitors the state of the Rubicon Forest and current and planned logging operations.

We work to keep in touch with:

- contemporary science regarding forest ecosystems and biodiversity;
- logging practices and the economics of the wood products industry in Australia;
- the work of other conservation organisations including, in particular, citizen science organisations such as Wildlife of the Central Highlands (WOTCH);
- current and foreshadowed moves in the legal and regulatory environment.

RFPG continues to research, develop and advocate around various tourism options for the Rubicon Forest, including interpretive tourist routes encompassing culture, history, flora and fauna and geology (in particular the great Cerberean Caldera).

RFPG is conscious of the importance of the Rubicon Forest to the Taungurung people and works to build our own awareness of these cultural and spiritual ties, including the colonial history.

### Policy dialogue

The policy environment is complex (see our [Forest Struggles](#) resource).

RFPG closely monitors current and foreshadowed policy initiatives at the local, state and federal levels. We research the technical and political considerations framing such initiatives and invest in high level policy analysis critique and advocacy. See [Rescue the Rubicon](#) for an overview of our policy position.

RFPG engages in direct policy dialogue with VicForests and DELWP and with ministers and parliamentary representatives. We participate in such consultative opportunities as are offered including the preparation of numerous submissions. (Links to some of RFPG submissions [here](#).)

One important facet of our policy engagement is the monitoring of logging, from listing on the TRP to inclusion on the Timber Harvesting Schedule to harvesting and regeneration.

RFPG has submitted reports of numerous alleged breaches of the Code of Forest Practice to DELWP's Timber Harvesting Compliance Unit. Unfortunately, our experience of the THCU is marked by long delays, lack of transparency and dubious determinations.

## Public awareness

RFPG is committed to increasing public awareness of the impact and implications of unsustainable logging in the Rubicon Forest; of the lack of balance regarding alternative and competing uses of the Forest; and of the economic and employment potential of forest tourism.

RFPG has deployed a range of strategies to promote public awareness including forest tours, letters and articles in the local and metropolitan media, demonstrations in Melbourne, production and dissemination of leaflets, brochures videos and photograph collections.

We have developed an informative website and we are somewhat active on social media.

## Economic development

RFPG recognises that logging contributes to employment and economic activity in our region although this is declining with the loss of local mills and is widely overstated. VicForests invests heavily in promoting this perception.

In the medium to long term there has to be government support for transition, for businesses and communities, out of native forest logging and into plantation timber, tourism and other economic activities.

RFPG has urged government investment in the necessary structural transitions in a range of submissions.

We are particularly conscious of the potential of the Rubicon Forest to support appropriate forest tourism and the contribution this could make to economic development in the region. RFPG has recommended a number of practical initiatives to the Murrindindi Shire Council (MSC) to enhance the tourist experience. These include interpretive displays, road upgrades, improved signage, and other investments. (RFPG submission to MSC June 2019 [here](#).)

## Networking

RFPG is a small community group and our focus is on the Rubicon Forest and the forests of the Central Highlands more generally.

However, we are also part of a much broader forest conservation movement and of the wider environment movement. By ourselves the RFPG has limited reach but the wider forest conservation movement is impacting on public opinion and driving improvements in the legal and regulatory environment.

RFPG aims to contribute to the wider forest conservation movement as well as benefitting from the inspiration and support provided by our friends in other organisations and working on other fronts.

We are continuing to work with and support [Environmental Justice Australia](#) which gives legal advice to environmental organisation and pursues court action on their behalf.

We support and benefit from the amazing work of [Wildlife of the Central Highlands \(WOTCH\)](#) and other citizen scientists.

We work with the [Environmental Media Foundation](#) and other independent video-makers in the creation of short, hard-hitting videos and their dissemination online.

## Organisational development

Developing our organisation is critical to our effectiveness and sustainability. This includes networking and membership; communications (media liaison, website, social media, etc); financial capacity; knowledge and skills development across the range of issues we are addressing and the activities we mount; and improving our organisational practices.

Opportunities for organisational development arise in the course of all of our activities and RFPG seeks to take full advantage of such opportunities.



## Activities 2018-19

Highlights of the RFPG's program of action in 2018-19 include the following.

### Preventing, warning and reporting breaches of the Code

RFPG monitors the Government's Allocation Order, VicForests' Timber Release Plan (TRP) and Coupe Schedule, the harvesting operations of VicForests contractors, and the success or otherwise of VicForests' regeneration practices. (View [regulatory map](#) for the relationship between these various processes.)

Over the last year our focus has been on the Snobs Creek valley and the area abutting the Mount Torbreck Scenic and Natural Features Reserve and the planned extension of logging in the southern section near Cambarville and Lake Mountain.

Fig 3, showing the north eastern part of the Rubicon Forest indicates the magnitude of the task of locating the coupes, assessing the possibility of breaches, monitoring the harvesting and regeneration in all of the coupes scheduled for logging and harvested.

Over the last three years RFPG has identified over 20 probable breaches of the Code ranging from escaped regeneration burns, landscape and visual impact, impact of regeneration burn on habitat trees, failure to retain habitat trees, harvesting and roading through waterways, soil erosion and megacoupes (overly narrow and incomplete buffers).

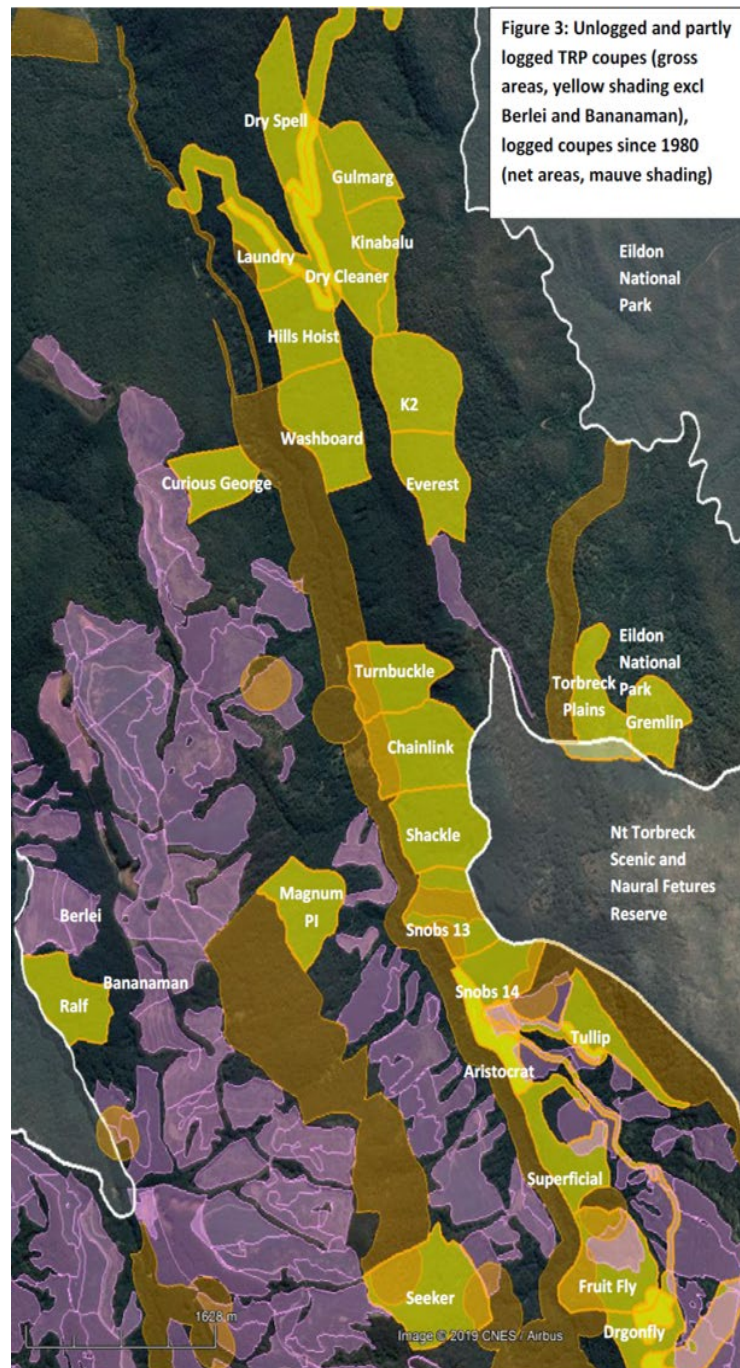


Figure 3: Unlogged and partly logged TRP coupes (gross areas, yellow shading excl Berlei and Bananamam), logged coupes since 1980 (net areas, mauve shading)

Fig 3. Shows southern part of the Rubicon Forest, north of Camberville and east of Lake Mountain. Purple shows net area of previously logged coupes; brown shows special protection zones; light green shows (gross area of) coupes on the current harvesting schedule. (Map prepared by Nick Legge on the basis of VF and DEWLP data)



RFPG has had one or two small victories in terms of getting vulnerable coupes removed from the TRP but generally the machine rolls on.



*Fig 4. Saturation harvesting, Royston Range (Photo EMF)*

See for an example of RFPG advocacy (the 'one tree at a time' strategy), [Impending breaches of the Code of Forest Practice on the southwestern slopes of Mount Bullfight](#) (19 October 2018).

A recent breach report concerned the coupe Rampart at the Dom Dom Saddle where recent logging has left a gash which is visible from the Maroondah Highway.

We have had virtually no success in our breach reports. The Timber Harvesting Compliance Unit (THCU) of DELWP can take months or years to respond to breach reports but when it suits them can respond within weeks. The grounds for rejecting our allegations of breaches are often quite arbitrary. Its adoption of a narrow legalistic approach means that it fails to evaluate breaches against the principles and spirit of the Code. The THCU rejection of the breach report regarding Rampart at Dom Dom was that it is not very visible and most cars are driving quite fast at that point. In rejecting a breach of the scenic landscape protection clause applying to views from the Rubicon Historic Area it decided that the area had been mistakenly included in the relevant table, notwithstanding the magnificent and widely viewed landscape of the area.

RFPG has been very critical of VicForests for late notification of its harvesting schedule and its failure to publish coupe plans and coupe maps online, in addition to its failure to adhere to the principles of the Code of Forest Practice.

RFPG will continue to engage with VicForests as part of our 'one tree at a time' strategy. However, VicForests has only limited discretion in view of its government imposed obligations to deliver under the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act of 1996. Tree by tree negotiation and even significant revision of the Code will not save the forests in the face of extreme and unsustainable government imposed harvesting targets.

## Public awareness

### Forest tours

About 30 people came on a mountain forests and river ecology tour in May 2018, led by local ecologist Ann Jelinek. Members of the Alexandra Rotary Club participated in a tour of the forest and logged coupes in August 2018.

Members of the Alexandra and District Traders and Tourism Association joined in a similar tour of remnant forest areas and logged coupes.

About 40 people came to a forest weekend, based in Taggerty, which included tours and wildlife spot-lighting, led by members of WOTCH (Wildlife Of The Central Highlands). Accommodation was offered by RFPG members and we all enjoyed shared meals and discussions.

Another forest tour was organised for local residents in April, focusing on the historic (1928) hydro electricity scheme with its tramways and kilometres of open aqueducts and the four small power stations that are still in use today.

### Information stalls in Alexandra and Yea

Information stalls were held in Alexandra in April and June 2018. (See [Community engagement: RFPG stalls in Alex and Yea.](#))

An information stall backed by a large banner was set up at the Snobs Creek Hatchery Open Day in June 2018 to inform visitors of the grave threat to the hatchery posed by logging in the surrounding forest.

### The HeART of the Forest

The RFPG co-sponsored an art exhibition at the Rustic Simplicity shop in Alexandra during the latter half of 2018. The exhibition drew attention to the beauty of the Rubicon Forest and encouraged visitors to explore the forest.

RFPG members also designed and produced a post card for sending the Premier entitled 'Don't trash our mountain ash'. This post card as well as the RFPG's 'Rescue the Rubicon' were displayed and distributed during (and after) the HeART of the Forest exhibition.

### Media

We have maintained a continuing stream of letters and media releases to various media outlets, in particular the Alexandra Standard. Several of our letters to the editor and opinion pieces have made it into The Age and The Weekly Times.

A selection of recent media pieces:

- Rod Falconer's [Open letter to Victorian recreational fishing associations](#) (18 July 2018);
- Lea Jelinek's [Threatened species day](#) (in the Alex Std 12 September 2018);
- Nick Legge's [Lake Mountain and Mt Bullfight](#) (in the Alex Std, 24 October 2018)
- Ann Jelinek's [How Forest Logging is Destroying Australia's environmental future](#), published in 'Independent Australia' (2 June 2019),
- Ken Deacon's [letter](#) to the Alexandra Standard (15 May 2019)
- Feature article on [Save Snobs](#) (in the Alex Standard, 17 July 2019);

Our members are also active on Facebook and Twitter although our performance here could be improved.

### Protests

We participated in a joint demonstration outside Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio's electoral office on Endangered Species Day (7 September 2018) delivering a letter to her listing the endangered species that were being further endangered by logging in the Rubicon.

We helped organise a snap rally of over 100 people outside Parliament House on March 2018, in response to planned demonstration by loggers and the CFMEU against the reduced supply of timber to the Heywood timber mill, when it was threatened with closure.

We joined in a demonstration in the Strathbogie Ranges against logging of the remnant forest there in which endangered Greater Gliders have been recorded.

We joined in a demonstration outside Daniel Andrews' electoral office on July 27<sup>th</sup> organised by the Friends of the Earth and the Toolangi Forest Protection Group.

In June 2018, we led a cavalcade of over 80 people to inspect the devastation through logging and burning in the Royston Range. This is possibly the largest



contiguous clear-felled area in the state – where around 1000 hectares have been logged in the past 5 years. The area includes coupes that are larger than the regulations permit with retained buffers killed by regeneration burns in several places, springs and waterways illegally logged, steep slopes already eroding, and previous coupes infested by blackberries. Over forty people carried in a twenty-five metre banner, saying 'Save the Rubicon – Stop the Logging' and a thirteen metre-long banner proclaimed 'Forests for Life, Not Logging'. Drone footage was taken and sent far and wide from our website and Facebook page. See [Save the Rubicon - Stop the Logging](#).

### Research

Research, led by Nick Legge, has been a key activity for RFPG.

[100 years of logging in the Rubicon State Forest](#) (10 October 2018) uses photographs old and new, Landsat images and graphics based on VicForests harvesting data to demonstrate the intensification of logging in the Rubicon Forest, notwithstanding the extensive loss through bushfires.

See also [Landsat images confirm extensive logging in Rubicon State Forest](#) (movie, 26 May 2018).

Our focus in the last year has been on the impact of intensified logging on the age class profile of the ash trees of the Rubicon Forest. In this work we have drawn upon data from VicForests and DELWP. See [RFPG research exposes looming threat to biodiversity](#) (30 June 2019).

## Policy engagement

RFPG continues to monitor the forests policy environment and to formulate and advocate around policy directions which might contribute to a more responsible and sustainable management of Victoria's native forests.

See our overview of [Forest policy: recent and current initiatives](#) (27 March 2019).

Our broad policy platform is outlined in [Rescue the Rubicon](#) (from August 2017) and [Protect the Rubicon: a Roadmap for Forest Governance Reform](#) (6 September 2018).

### FSC accreditation of VicForests

VF needs Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification. The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) [commented](#) in 2014: "FSC accreditation is widely recognized in the paper and printing industries and would allow VicForests to more effectively market its products to environmentally-conscious customers." Since then Bunnings has indicated it will require FSC certification.

RFPG provided a strong [submission](#) to the review by forest management consultants SCS in 2017 (which reported in May 2018). The SCS report identified a number of 'non conformances' (not conforming to the standards of the FSC).

In Jan 2019 VF wrote to stakeholders (including RFPG) acknowledging that:

*Major non-conformances were found in four of the 23 audited elements, and consequently VicForests did not attain the Controlled Wood standard. However, the process was critical to providing a clear focus on areas for change. The auditor identified the following areas for improvement:*

- *clearfell harvesting impacts on some high conservation values,*
- *the implementation of VicForests' High Conservation Values Strategy, and*
- *stakeholder engagement.*

*VicForests is heeding the results of that audit and moving rapidly to modify its approaches to harvesting practices to meet the necessary standards. In line with our continuous improvement, this is part of what we believe will be a better Victorian native harvesting operation.*

*To that end, we have completed internal planning and have begun reviewing and modifying our silvicultural methods to ensure demonstrable protection of High Conservation Values.*

*As this process evolves, we also seek to improve our stakeholder engagement through increasing opportunities for major stakeholders to provide input and to influence the direction of VicForests' forest management activities.*

RFPG responded substantively to this invitation reviewing our disappointing experience with respect to VF engagement and highlighting the importance of reviewing the code.

As part of its [FSC 2020 project](#) VicForests 'has reviewed and amended its Harvesting and Regeneration Systems and High Conservation Values (HCVs) Management Systems to better align with FSC Controlled Wood standard' and released following draft plans for stakeholder input. RFPG submitted a highly critical response to both of VicForests' consultation papers. See [RFPG highlights flaws in VicForests' HCV and HRS consultation papers](#) (30 June 2019).

Subsequently it was announced that VF had achieved Responsible Wood certification (see [VF media release re Responsible Wood certification](#), 7/2/2019 and [BSI summary report](#), 15/1/2019).

RFPG has commented, in subsequent correspondence to both VF and BIS, that the complete lack of consultation with conservation groups in the BIS audit did not bode well for VF's stated intention to address the criticisms in the SCS report of its 'stakeholder engagement'.

#### RFA modernisation

The Regional Forests Agreements (RFAs) are 20 year agreements which provide for exemption from the Commonwealth's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act and certain export controls for state government timber operations ([AG DAWR overview](#)).

The C/w and the states have been extremely slack about undertaking the five yearly reviews promised in the original RFAs. The second review undertaken, cutely referred to as the Third five yearly review, was released in December 2017 public comment was invited. See [RFPG Submission](#) (29/1/2018).

A 20 year roll over was [expected](#) but Victoria [insisted](#) on a two year interim RFA to allow time for an appropriate policy review before deciding whether to roll over. Unfortunately the pace of the review has been excruciatingly slow and at this point it would appear that there will have been no substantive progress by the March 2020 deadline.

In early 2018 the Victorian Minister (Lily D'Ambrosio) announced the Modernising RFAs project ([Feb 2019 Newsletter here](#)). This kicked off with a series of Roundtables ([here](#)) including two meetings with Environmental NGOs. RFPG participated in ENGO consultation. The government claims that the Modernisation project is being undertaken as a 'partnership' with traditional owners ([here](#)).

The government has appointed a [scientific expert panel](#) to be hosted by the Royal Society to provide technical advice. Also on the scientific front (and hosted by the Royal Society) DELWP is sponsoring a [public lecture series](#):

A number of ENGOs have been invited to join a RFA Reference Group, both on behalf of their own organisations and to represent the ENGOs generally.

In early 2019 DELWP contracted a consultant to prepare a consultation paper on the 'modernisation' of the Victorian RFAs. RFPG was not impressed with the paper and argued that the RFAs should not be renewed. See [RFPG Submission to RFA Modernisation Consultation](#) (30 June 2019)

#### Independent review of timber harvesting

In 2018 DELWP, at the request of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, commissioned an independent review of its timber harvesting regulation. See RFPG submission [here](#).

The review recommendations went beyond DELWP's role in timber harvesting regulation to encompass all regulation undertaken by DELWP (Review Report [here](#)). The panel made 14 recommendations, which have been accepted in full (DELWP response to the review [here](#)). These include:

- Increasing transparency in the delivery of environmental regulation by publishing key documents, including a regulatory framework, a compliance and enforcement policy, and statements of regulatory intent for key areas of regulation;

- Improving relationships and engagement with stakeholders, the community and those we regulate;
- Identifying enhancements to regulatory capability – including people, processes, technology and infrastructure for the delivery of regulatory services and;
- Reviewing laws to recommend legislative changes needed to ensure modern regulatory powers.

DELWP's response includes:

*DELWP will pursue a variation to the Code to correct errors and ambiguities, and to incorporate new environmental protections, such as for large trees. This will include a public consultation process. As part of this process, DELWP will engage with stakeholders to develop a common understanding on the Code.*

*DELWP will review sections 45, 46, 70 and 71 of the SFT Act and will provide any recommendations to Government on amendments to address limitations and make it a more effective administrative compliance tool. This review will be completed by 30 April 2019.*

*DELWP will work with other government agencies, environmental non-government organisations and VicForests to scope and create a system of shared data across government agencies and environmental non-government organisations. This will be completed by 31 December 2019.*

*DELWP will work with Government on considerations to modernise the legislative framework for timber harvesting as part of the Future of our Forests work. This work includes embarking on a major program to modernise the State's Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) and the forest management system they accredit, through comprehensive engagement with Victorian communities.*

*As part of its response to the Independent Review the state government has established within DELWP the Office of the Conservation Regulator ([OCR](#)) "to bring together all of DELWP's regulatory functions in one place. Led by Victoria's first Chief Conservation Regulator, it will coordinate and oversee all DELWP's direct regulatory responsibilities across more than 20 Acts of Parliament".*

### *The Code*

The Independent Review recommends that DELWP improve existing regulatory tools including the Code of Forest Practice. In response DELWP has embarked on

*two-staged review of the Code to provide greater regulatory certainty and improve environmental outcomes.*

*Stage 1 of the Code review will primarily focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, clearly stating purpose, scope and the intent of the instrument, and correcting administrative errors. It may also include any relevant regulatory measures announced by government, such as the protection of large trees from timber harvesting. I am pleased to advise that public consultation on these proposed changes will commence in July and will provide an opportunity to develop a common understanding of the Code.*

*Subsequent to the above process, stage 2 of the Code review will commence in 2020 to provide a more comprehensive review based on new scientific evidence, information and findings from the RFA forest value assessments, and broader regulatory and forest management planning reviews.*

RFPG and other forest conservation organisations had expected the Stage 1 review to have commenced by now but this has not happened. When the consultation is opened we will be submitting

See our note on the Code in Rescue (August 2017) [here](#). See also our [RFPG Roadmap for Forests Governance Reform](#) (Sept 2018).

#### *VAGO report*

In Dec 2013 the Victorian Auditor General reported on the [Management of Victoria's Native Forest Timber Resources](#). In his covering letter the AG wrote:

*DEPI [now DELWP] and VicForests demonstrate many environmentally, socially and economically sustainable practices to fulfil their roles in timber resource management. However, DEPI is not effectively delivering its approach to protect forest values, and needs to improve the way it documents decisions affecting where harvesting can occur.*

*I could not assess whether the agencies had made suitable progress in sustainably managing the timber resources or if they had achieved the desired outcomes, such as protecting endangered species from harvesting impacts, because DEPI has not had the measures, monitoring and data in place to assess this.*

As the logging of the Rubicon State Forest expanded and intensified the RFPG wrote to the Auditor General (in April 2016, September 2017 and again in Jan 2018), highlighting the shortfalls in implementation of the 2013 recommendations and urging a review of the 2013 report.

In June 2018 VAGO published [Follow Up of Selected 2012–13 and 2013–14 Performance Audits](#) including the 2013 forestry report. The 2018 Follow -up focused on whether native timber resources on public land were being managed productively and sustainably.

For further RFPG comment see: [VAGO report \(4 August 2018\) slams DELWP and DEDJTR](#).

#### *Court action*

RFPG is monitoring closely two important court cases currently in process.

In the Federal Court EJA (on behalf of the Friends of Leadbeater's Possum, FoLB) has challenged whether [logging in endangered species habitat](#) can continue to have a special exemption from federal environment protection law. 'Since the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) system was established in 1997, logging has pushed unique Australian species like the Swift Parrot, Leadbeater's Possum, Greater Glider and the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo closer to extinction. The FoLB case argues that certain past and future logging in Victoria's Central Highlands is not exempt from the federal threatened species law because it is not in accordance with the RFA.'

In the Supreme Court EJA (on behalf of the Fauna and Flora Research Collective, F&FRC) seeks to ensure the Victorian government protects the minimum area of old growth forest guaranteed by law in East Gippsland and prevent VicForests from [cutting down spectacular areas of old growth forest in eastern Victoria](#) that have never been logged.

See EJA index page re their forest work here: <https://www.envirojustice.org.au/our-work/nature/forests/>

#### *Ministerial correspondence*

We have written repeatedly to Lily D'Ambrosio, the Premier, other State Ministers, Commonwealth Ministers and local government protesting about the accelerated destruction of the Rubicon State Forest.

### *Engagement with Government*

Since 2017 RFPG has been asked to participate in a range of Government Reviews, including

- (i) a review by Biosis of Code protections applying to rainforest, threatened species and habitat,
- (ii) a review of the enforcement of the Code by an Independent Panel appointed by DELWP,
- (iii) a review by VicForests of its High Conservation Value and Silviculture strategies and
- (iv) a review by DELWP of the RFA modernisation program.

### *Engagement with VicForests*

RFPG has met with VicForests on 7 occasions over the past year to discuss coupe schedules and plans, but with few changes to VicForests' plans resulting from these meetings

### *Engagement with MSC*

RFPG [Submission to Murrindindi Shire Council](#) on forest tourism development (12 June 2019) urges, in summary:

- that MSC establish, as part of the Tourism and Events Strategy, a Murrindindi Forest Tourism Development and Promotion Committee;
- that MSC reinstate a 2WD gravel road at the eastern end of Cathedral Lane alongside the pine plantation;
- urges Council to do more to help protect what is left of the over-logged forests in our Shire, by developing and promoting their extraordinary tourist potential;
- suggests that Council would convene and resource this Committee which would be responsible for investigating promoting and where appropriate seeking funding for the forest tourism development initiatives;



- asked for the reinstatement of gravel road at the end of Cathedral Lane as Council's contribution to the proposed scenic loop drive from Cathedral Range State Park to Blue Range Road and back to the State Park via Tweed Spur Road.

For more detail refer to detailed submission. On 26 June Council resolved:

- That Council refer this item for consideration as part of submissions for the Tourism and Events Strategy.
- That subject to support and commitment from DELWP in relation to the broader touring route proposed, that Council investigate the case for upgrade of the eastern end of Cathedral Lane.



## Resources and capability

### People

The most valued resources of the RFPG are our people: our members and friends and the volunteers who serve on our Executive Committee.

At 30 June 2019 RFPG had 105 members and 67 friends (provided support but not yet members).

The committee members for 2018-19 were: Ken Deacon (convenor), Diane Robb, Ann Jelinek, Bruce Hyatt, Jill Sanguinetti, Nick Legge, David Legge and Bev Dick.

### Legal

RFPG is registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria (A0097175V) and with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. Our ABN is 75594595447.

We do not (yet) have Gift Deductible Recipient status (applied July 2018).

### Finance

See Financial Report over leaf.

RFPG membership fee for 2018-19 was \$0.



## RFPG Financial Report 2018-19

Rubicon Forest Protection Group Inc						
Receipts & Payments Account for the Financial Year Ended 30-Jun-19						
		Current Financial Year, 1 July 2018 - 30 June 2019				Last Year
		Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total	Total
RECEIPTS	Notes	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Voluntary Income		8,047			8,047	2,540
Charitable Income	1	500		0	500	500
Advance Receipts		0		0	0	0
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>		<b>8,547</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>8,547</b>	<b>3,040</b>
PAYMENTS		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Projects						
Project One	2			6,000	6,000	0
Other Activities	3	926			926	0
Administration	4		585	0	585	88
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>		<b>926</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>6,000</b>	<b>7,511</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>NET RECEIPTS-PAYMENTS</b>		<b>7,621</b>	<b>-585</b>	<b>-6,000</b>	<b>1,035</b>	<b>2,952</b>
Movements in Funds for the Financial Year Ended 30-Jun-19						
Cash Assets		Bt'Fwd at 01-July-18	Receipts in Period	Payments in Period	Transfers in Period	Cd'Fwd at 30-Jun-19
Cash at Bank & in Hand						
In-kind Receipts and Payments	5	0	211	-211	0	0
Bank, Current Account		108	8,363	-7,300	0	1,171
<b>Total</b>		<b>108</b>	<b>8,574</b>	<b>-7,511</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,171</b>
Comprising:						
General Fund		108	8,574	-926	0	7,756
Designated Funds				-585		-585
Restricted Funds						
Project One		0	0	-6,000	0	-6,000
<b>Total Funds</b>		<b>108</b>				<b>1,171</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grant from Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority</li> <li>2. Proposed television advertisement, (not proceeded with, funds returned)</li> <li>3. Repair drone, new UHF sets, calico for banner</li> <li>4. LVI membership (and insurance cover) plus internet costs</li> <li>5. Calico for banner</li> </ol>						

## How can I help?

1. Please join the RFPG (if you have not done so already).

Download and fill in the [membership application form](#) for 2019-20 and forward completed application to [admin@rubiconforest.org](mailto:admin@rubiconforest.org).

2. Please donate to the RFPG. We currently have significant payments pending which are well in excess of our current bank balance! Please donate to:

Name: Rubicon Forest Protection Group Inc

BSB: 633000

Account number: 159830272

3. Please encourage friends, family, neighbours etc to join RFPG (suggest they write to [info@rubiconforest.org](mailto:info@rubiconforest.org)). Come to our gatherings and forest tours.

4. Please explore our website - [rubiconforest.org](http://rubiconforest.org) - and let us know if there are areas of our work which you would particularly like to help with. Visit other [forest conservation websites](#) for further news and views.

5. Visit the Rubicon Forest to see for yourself the beauty and the damage.

6. Please help disseminate our messages via social media or simply talking to people about what is going on. Visit our Facebook page ([/rubiconforest](https://www.facebook.com/rubiconforest)) and follow us on Twitter ([@RubiconForest](https://twitter.com/RubiconForest)).

7. Email and ring your [political representatives](#) to make your concerns known to them.