

## SUBMISSION GUIDE

# How to have your say on the future of Victoria's state forests

Until **midnight on January 12, 2025**, the Victorian government's "Great Outdoors Taskforce" is seeking feedback on what the future holds for Eastern Victoria's state forests.

Your submission will join hundreds of others to guide the taskforce's recommendations to government on what the future for Victoria's state forests should look like. **It's critical that the call for protection of our native forests is louder than the push for their exploitation.**

In this guide, we've highlighted the concerns of EJA lawyers and campaigners regarding the future of Victoria's state forests and provided a step-by-step guide with recommendations on how to address these issues in your submission.

# Why this matters

Industrial native forest logging reduces biodiversity, disrupts ecosystems, and accelerates climate change by releasing stored carbon. It destroys water quality and soil stability, with recovery taking centuries. Not to mention, it operates at a loss, with **millions of taxpayer dollars** spent every year to prop up an industry that relies on the destruction of one of our most precious shared resources – nature.

In 2023 the Victorian Government committed to ending native forest logging in Victoria by the beginning of 2024; promising to “**deliver the largest expansion to our public forests reserve system in our state’s history**”. The *Great Outdoors Taskforce* was created to lead the conversation on what the future of Eastern Victoria’s state forests should look like.

Since the commitment to end native forest logging was made, political changes have put both its future and the future of our forests at risk. To safeguard this commitment, **legally enshrined protections are needed** to ensure Victoria’s native forests are not vulnerable to future industrial logging and mining.

This consultation is your chance to have a say in the future of Victoria’s state forests. With a Victorian state election less than two years away, **it’s crucial that we come together to demand a future where both nature and community can thrive.**

## We want to hear from you!

If you have any questions, need further support, or would like to share your submission, contact EJA’s forest campaigner, Luke Chamberlain, via the Q&A email: [luke.chamberlain@envirojustice.org.au](mailto:luke.chamberlain@envirojustice.org.au).

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Awabakal, Bunurong, melukerdee, Larrakia, punnilerpanner, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri peoples, the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our team lives and where the EJA office is located. We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the forest Country in Eastern Victoria which is the subject of this consultation process. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise that this land always was and always will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land because sovereignty has never been ceded.

# According to EJA – what are the key issues?

Environmental Justice Australia’s campaigners and lawyers have reviewed the terms of reference for the *Great Outdoors Taskforce* and identified the key issues outlined below. You can read our recommendations about how to include these issues in your submission further down.

- 1. Long-term protection against industrial logging and mining for Victoria’s native forests**
- 2. Forest restoration for climate action**
- 3. Funding for conservation management**
- 4. First Nations leadership**
- 5. World Heritage assessment and nomination**

# 1

## Long term protection against logging and mining

Victoria is the most cleared and degraded state in Australia,<sup>1</sup> making the long-term health of every remaining forest crucial.

Forests are vital for rare and threatened native species like the Greater Glider, Long-footed Potoroo, Tree Geebung, and the Spotted-tailed Quoll. They also provide critical wildlife corridors from the coast to the alpine summits allowing animals and genetics to move across the landscape.

Despite the decision to end native forest logging, no trees have been formally protected, and political shifts could allow industrial logging to resume. The best legal mechanism currently available to safeguard these forests against industrial logging and mining is adding them to national parks and conservation reserves.

Our laws must also be reformed to reflect the government's commitment to ending logging in both state and private forests.

---

<sup>1</sup> Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (2023). Victorian State of the Environment 2023 Report. <<https://www.ces.vic.gov.au/soe2023>>

# 2

## Forest restoration for climate action

Restoring native forests is crucial in the fight to limit the worst impacts of climate change, as they are vital for securely storing carbon.<sup>2</sup> Eastern Victoria's forests are especially important, as they are among the most carbon-dense on Earth.<sup>3</sup>

Ending native forest logging offers a significant climate action opportunity, allowing state forests to permanently capture and store carbon. To fully capitalise on this, all older forests must be protected, and previously logged or degraded forests should be restored, enabling them to mature and continue sequestering carbon from the atmosphere.

To safeguard the carbon storage potential of these forests, they must be permanently protected within national parks.

---

<sup>2</sup> Federici, S., Lee, D. and Herold, M. (2017). Forest Mitigation: A Permanent Contribution to the Paris Agreement.

<sup>3</sup> Keith H, Mackey BG, Lindenmayer DB (2009). Re-evaluation of forest biomass carbon stocks and lessons from the world's most carbon-dense forests. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2009 Jul 14;106(28):11635-40. doi: 10.1073/pnas.0901970106. Epub 2009 Jun 24. PMID: 19553199; PMCID: PMC2701447.

# 3

## Funding for conservation

For our national parks and reserves to withstand the dual challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, they require secure funding and effective management. A recent Victorian Government inquiry revealed that the state's reserve system is underfunded,<sup>4</sup> putting both nature and cultural heritage at risk. As climate change impacts worsen, it's crucial that our parks and reserves receive the funding needed to support conservation, cultural heritage protection, and fire management.

---

<sup>4</sup> Parliament of Victoria. Legislative Council. Environment and Planning Committee. (2021). Inquiry into ecosystem decline in Victoria. Volume 1. <  
<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/4af628/contentassets/49a77c8206824f2281ccfa8d6fa35587/ecosystem-decline-in-victoria.pdf>>

# 4

## First Nations leadership

Victoria's native forests are of immense cultural value, holding deep significance for First Nations peoples, whose ancestral connections and traditional knowledge are embedded in the land.

EJA supports calls from Traditional Owners for properly resourced self-determined land management methods which may include full management of Aboriginal Title, the handing back of public lands and expanding ranger programs.

# 5

## World heritage assessment and nomination

World Heritage sites are locations of exceptional global importance, safeguarded for future generations to value and experience.

The natural and cultural significance of Victoria's native forests is of outstanding universal value, and they merit consideration for UNSECO World Heritage listing. Currently, Victoria has only two World Heritage sites, both recognized for their cultural significance. In contrast, Queensland, New South Wales, and Tasmania each have World Heritage sites that include natural landscapes, such as forests. Including Victoria's native forests in future World Heritage nominations should be part of the state's forest management.



# Getting started: how to lodge your submission

The only way to add your feedback to this consultation is through the online survey accessible [here](#).

You can either:

- Complete the written survey;
- Complete the map survey;
- A combination of both.

**We encourage you to prioritise the written survey**, as it lets you share your views on forest management generally. If you have a particular area of interest, you can also use the map survey function to provide feedback on that specific site.

## OPTION 1: Submit feedback to the written survey

- Open the [online survey](#) using your preferred internet browser
- **What you care about (page 1):** You will be asked to select which aspects of state forest management are most important to you from a list of pre-filled options. This section is required—you must choose at least one option to proceed, and you can select up to three. **We recommend considering the importance of conservation and biodiversity; and the protection and preservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in your response.** Click “next” to continue.
- **Recreation and tourism (page 2):** You will be prompted to select the activities you most frequently undertake in state forests and how you think your recreational experience could be improved from a list of pre-filled options. These questions are not required, scroll down to continue.

You will be asked to provide feedback on how visitors to state forests can use the land in a way that protects wildlife and plants. This section is required to continue. **We recommend selecting the things you consider to be most important and using the "something else" option to highlight the importance of the key issues mentioned above.** Click “next” to continue.

- **Conservation (page 3):** You will be prompted to select aspects of forest conservation from a list of pre-filled options. You can select up to 4 items. **We recommend using this section to highlight conservation of the forest ecosystem; restoring/ revegetating forests; ensuring forests are resilient to climate change; and using the “something**

**else” toggle to discuss long-term protection through expanded national parks and the importance of First Nations justice.** Scroll down to continue.

In the textbox provided you will be prompted to outline any opportunities or ideas you have on how to best manage state forests for conservation. In this text box you can elaborate on why long-term legally enshrined protections through expanded national parks and a world heritage nomination are essential for forest conservation. Click “next” to continue.

- **Managing for multiple purposes (page 4):** In the textboxes provided, you will be prompted to provide feedback on what types of forest activities and uses can coexist with conservation; what forest activities create challenges; and how we can better plan and manage our state forests for shared benefits. These questions are not required. We recommend using the last box to highlight the importance of long-term forest protections with expanded national parks. Click “next” to continue.
- **Regional economic development (page 5):** In the textbox provided, you will be prompted to provide feedback on possible economic opportunities in these state forest areas. This question is not required but **you may wish to discuss the opportunity of increased nature tourism from expanded national parks and a World Heritage nomination.** Click “next” to continue.
- **How we can work together (page 6):** In the textbox provided you will be prompted to provide feedback on collaboration between land managers, Traditional Owner groups and community and on how you or your group would like to be involved in forest management. This question is not required, but you may wish to discuss the importance of First Nations justice. Click “next” to continue.
- **About you (page 7):** You will be prompted to provide information about yourself and/or the organisation that you represent. Only the age question is required and there is a “prefer not to say” option if you would like to opt out of answering. **Press submit.** You will receive a submission ID number when your submission is complete.
- **Congratulations on having your say!**

## OPTION 2: Submit feedback to the map survey

- **Open the [online survey](#):** use your preferred internet browser
- **"Pin" a location that is significant to you** by following the prompts. Click on the "Key values" button on the right side to choose and rank your most important values. Scroll down to provide any suggestions for how the area could be better managed. This is where you can discuss the key issues outlined above.

- **Note:** you are required to include a display name, which can be your own name, the name of a group you represent, or a pseudonym.
- **Click “submit”:** If you'd like to select more than one location, you will need to make multiple submissions.