



Hon Jacinta Allan
Shadow Minister for Regional Cities
Shadow Minister for Agriculture
Parliament of Victoria
PO Box 399, Bendigo, VIC 3552

19 November 2014

Dear Jacinta

It was a pleasure to meet you albeit briefly at the VAFI Dinner last month and I am writing to commend you and your party on your decision to not support the establishment of a new National Park in the Central Highlands of Victoria.

As well as being President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia I am also a Director of VicForests. I am writing this letter in my role as President and the following expresses the Institute's long-held position on these issues.

The Institute of Foresters of Australia is apolitical and tenure neutral and our aim is to support professional forest managers across all of Australia's 125 million hectares of forests. Our members work in National Parks and reserves, and multi-use forests that include production forests, plantations, agro-forests, water catchments and urban forests.

The Institute asserts that the Central Highlands Park proposal fails to meet the triple bottom principles for improved environmental, social and economic outcomes for the state of Victoria.

The Park proposal fails on environmental grounds because fire is the greatest threat to Leadbeater's possum and changing tenure will not improve the protection of this species, if anything it will make it considerably more vulnerable due to the loss of skilled forest managers, informed management and specialist fire-fighting equipment that accompanies the State's timber industry.

The Park proposal fails on social grounds because the proposed Park will close the State's natural forest timber industry which could result in over 3000 jobs in rural and regional Victoria, areas where there are limited if any real opportunities for alternative employment.

The Park proposal fails on economic grounds because there will be no substantial increase in economic activity as many of the activities that are said to arise from the proposal are already available. However the initial cost to Victorian government of compensation to the timber industry and its workers could be up to \$500 million and there will be ongoing welfare costs associated with displaced timber workers who will need help to adjust to their loss of employment. Claims that the new Park will generate a significant number of new employment opportunities have not materialised in other cases.



The Institute of Foresters of Australia

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The area of public forest available for harvesting in Victoria is less than 6% of the total 7 million hectares and over half of the forest area is already in formal and informal reserves. The Institute of Foresters of Australia believes creating a National Park is too blunt an instrument and is likely to fail due to a lack of funds to manage the bushfire risk. Instead we request that you continue to support the 13-step Action Plan for Leadbeater's Possum developed by Parks Victoria, Zoos Victoria and VicForests. This innovative cross-agency plan represents a modern active and adaptive management approach to conservation and deserves support. In our opinion this plan will give Leadbeater's Possum the greatest chance of survival.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further with the Institute.

Yours sincerely

Rob De Fegely RPF
IFA President