



The Hon. Ros Spence MP

Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Community Sport
Minister for Carers and Volunteers

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Dr Michelle Freeman and Professor Rod Keenan
Forestry Australia
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Dear Dr Freeman and Prof Keenan

Thank you for your letter of 23 October 2023 to the Premier, the Hon. Jacinta Allan MP, about VicForests and forestry in Victoria. As this matter falls within my portfolio of responsibilities, your correspondence has been forwarded to me for response.

The decision to end native timber harvesting in Victoria by 1 January 2024 and the transition away from native timber harvesting has clearly resulted in the need for the Victorian Government to reconsider the role and responsibilities of VicForests.

As a first step, VicForests was made a reorganising body as of 5 September 2023, removing the commercial imperatives on the performance of VicForests' functions and opening the way for changes to its governance.

As you may be aware, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) has a dedicated Forestry Transition group and it is actively working with VicForests to review its activities, including how the critical skills and functions of VicForests staff can be utilised to deliver the government's future forest management objectives.

This is also an opportunity to establish new ways of managing our forests for Traditional Owner and community needs, while protecting natural values. An advisory panel will be appointed to consult with Victorians and make recommendations to government on the areas of our forests that would be suitable for recreation opportunities, opportunities for Traditional Owner management, or that qualify for protection as National Parks. The government is currently considering the make-up of this panel.

Your ongoing input into Forestry Transition is always welcome and I encourage you to reach out to Phuong Tram, Acting Deputy Secretary of Forestry Transition at DEECA, [REDACTED]
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I look forward to ongoing engagement with you and Forestry Australia as we establish new and improved ways of managing our forests.

Yours sincerely

The Hon. Ros Spence MP
Minister for Agriculture

/ / 2023