



# AFCA

Australian Forests & Climate Alliance Inc.

**Autumn**  
**2018**



Co-ordinator report  
AFCA Activities

State reports—Vic,  
WA, NSW and up-  
coming NSW Events

Industrial Hemp—  
part of the solution

Threats to Forests  
National Update

Nil Tenure

Land Clearing

New website

AFCA Email Change

Social Media Tips by  
Meredith Stanton

Memberships Due

# Member Update



Intensive campaigning by forest activists is yielding results, but not as fast as needed.



## Sydney March 24th 2018

In Victoria groups have had significant legal wins, detailed within. Friends of the Leadbeaters Possum received a judgement from the Supreme Court on Friday 20th April, that there IS a case to be heard re whether logging can be exempted from federal environment law where it impacts endangered species. A case management hearing is set for 7th May. <https://www.envirojustice.org.au/case-to-proceed-to-test-vicforests-non-compliance-with-forest-agreement/>

Campaigning in some states against RFA renewals has compelled Federal Labor to exhibit (mild) nervousness about its 2016 federal election promise to renew Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs). It hasn't retracted its commitment, just admitted there should be a full scientific assessment before it occurs. Federal Labor isn't nervous enough.

At least it's an improvement upon unqualified Coalition support for native forest logging but unless Labor changes its policy and in writing, it's unlikely many gains will be made in the event they win the next federal election.

But there are always other alliances and who knows which minor parties might stand together on a platform for forest and climate protection? So it's

AFCA's new committee and volunteers have been working hard since our last update. We have:

- ◆ Partnered with CORENA's No More Bad Investments campaign that includes a no forest bioenergy and no logging component in its climate change petitions
- ◆ Re-formed the sub-group addressing burning native forests for energy. A Fact Sheet was developed and distributed nationally and multiple organisations are signing onto a national statement rejecting this as renewable energy. It will be used to educate the public, media and politicians. .
- ◆ Re-designed the AFCA website to accommodate the growing body of information that now exists about threats to forests, impacts of logging and clearing, the work of forest climate activists in various states and strategies and resources to share to encourage others
- ◆ Presented at forums to create wide awareness of what is happening to forests outside urban areas
- ◆ Written in support of member initiatives to exit native forest (NF) logging including to local government. Our latest correspondence was to His Royal Highness Prince Charles to provide a comprehensive and highly visual account of what RFA logging is doing to Australia. We communicated in response to an article in which Prince Charles was depicted with Senator Anne Ruston talking about the sustainability of Australian logging. We look forward to receiving and sharing the reply.
- ◆ Networked with significant non-member organisations and provided information and scientific reports as requested to assist in the development of forests and climate policy based on credible peer-reviewed science
- ◆ Organised and participated in physical campaigns against RFA renewals in NSW at Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Buladelah, Bateman's Bay, Eden and Sydney

**Still Time to Keep Up the Pressure**

# VICTORIA

## 1. Heyfield Mill Bailout/Purchase

The Victorian state government spent \$62 million buying the failing Heyfield sawmill which 4 years earlier was worth only \$27 million. A serious conflict of interest now exists with the state government owning the mill as well as owning VicForests that supplies Victorian mills.

## 2. Victorian Legal Cases

### Legal Case 1 – Fauna and Flora Research Collective vs Department of Environment Land Water and Planning

This case was brought against the environment department arguing that the state government has failed to protect 60% of wet and damp old growth forest in East Gippsland. As it proceeds 33 areas of old growth forest under threat from logging have temporary protection. The government denies it must meet the 60% target.

The recent protection of 2,500ha in the Kuark forest doesn't alleviate the government's legal difficulty or help it to meet the target of 60% protection.

That 2,500ha is 0.1% of the forest area available to VicForests. It is tiny area that allows the state government to poke a green feather in its cap. In reality it creates a protected island extremely vulnerable when all the forest around it can be logged/burnt.



### Legal Case 2 – Friends of Leadbeaters' Possum vs VicForests

Environmental Justice Australia (EJA) represented Friends of Leadbeater's Possum in a legal case for which a preliminary judgement was received March 2<sup>nd</sup>. In the preliminary question, Friends of Leadbeaters' Possum argued that exemption from federal law (EPBC) con-



ferred on Victorian RFAs is not and should no longer be justified due to non-compliance with terms in the RFA that require five-year reviews. Danya Jacobs from EJA summarised the outcome: *The Court found the Regional Forest Agreement for the Central Highlands exempts logging from Federal threatened species law – despite non-compliance with terms in the RFA that require five-yearly reviews – but importantly the Court also found that non-compliance with other terms in the RFA would remove that exemption. The Court rejected VicForests' argument that logging operations would be exempt from federal environment law even if there's non-compliance with all sorts of terms in the RFA, but also disagreed with our client that non-compliance with the five-year review terms in the RFA has removed the exemption. The Court found VicForests must comply with certain provisions of the RFA in order to receive the benefit of the exemption from Federal environment law.*

This test case could find that logging under the RFA is illegal and so should not be exempt from the EPBC Act.

[Here is the legal judgement](#)

**\*\*\* Read overleaf for further legal developments**

## 3. Victorian RFA Renewals:

Australia's 20-year RFAs commenced with East Gippsland's on Feb 3rd 1997 which:

- Provided native forest logging under the RFA legal exemption from federal environment laws
- Claimed to be a 'balance' between logging needs and environment values.
- Was accompanied by a flawed 700-page Comprehensive Regional Assessment document.

- Promised jobs and investment outcomes
- Promised ecological surveys, studies into logging impacts, sustainability indicators, reviews, but also, unlimited logging/wood chipping.
- Took no account of threats to volumes e.g. bushfires
- Permitted a 700% increase in wood chipping in the Tambo forest district.



#### Renewal of Victorian RFAs ignores:

- The fact that his forest management model is 20 years out of date;
- climate considerations;
- carbon sequestration and storage and water values;
- the fact that wildlife once common is now threatened with extinction;
- the major shift in markets to plantation timber;
- the fact that the export woodchip market is almost gone;
- the evidence that states don't enforce their own environmental laws;
- failure on every level.

Federal Liberal Senator Anne Ruston refused a request for \$26M to help the Victorian government carry out an RFA review. It's unsure if it will go ahead.

The Andrews government extended the East Gippsland RFA for another 2 years, announcing that all trees over 2.5m diameter will be protected, yet this is pointless if all forest around a giant tree is to be clearfelled and burnt.

It was also announced that 2,500 ha of the Kuark forest will be protected, (under what category we are unsure), and that pre-logging surveys will now be done by the government – which won't guarantee any better surveys, but it will shift the cost from VicForests to the tax-payer.

#### 4. Parliamentary Enquiry into VicForests

Instigated by the Shooters and Fishers Party, this enquiry backfired. Instead of indicating adequate volumes to continue industrial logging it recommended that the logging industry should be based on plantation wood owing to lack of long-term native forest supply.

#### 5. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) update

VicForests made its 4th attempt to gain FSC certification for its wood supply STD 30-010. Detailed reports were supplied by Environment East Gippsland and others, arguing that VicForests was in breach of the principles and criteria that a logging company must adhere to. After that EEG and others presented information to both the Australian and the International jurisdictions of FSC, that VicForests' membership be revoked.

**It will be interesting to see whether or not this occurs.**

#### 6. Local communities ark up. Rubicon, Mirboo North, Noojee, Strathbogies. This is what we like to hear!

Mirboo North – recently had South Gippsland Shire Council join the town to oppose VicForests logging plans. Noojee – a logging town (!) gets grumpy. VicForests claimed there were no Greater Gliders in the forests they want to clearfell. To prove their point they took the community out and instead of finding none found 3 and a heap of habitat trees.

Rubicon - locals are conducting protests and lobbying  
Strathbogies - blockades, protests and citizen scientists found a healthy Greater Glider population.

All towns are getting media.

#### Australian Paper/Nippon Pulp and Paper mill

Australian paper mill is 100% owned by Nippon paper and has a long term agreement with government for long-supply until 2030. It is not making a profit despite large subsidies. Gas prices are now crippling its bottom line.

#### Waste incinerator for pulp mill \$7.5M feasibility study

Relevant to the above, governments have provided \$5M and Nippon \$2.5M for a feasibility study into a waste incinerator to generate power. State government is keen as there's little space near Melbourne in which to dump rubbish. It will be extremely dangerous if this gets the go-ahead. Valley communities are outraged at the prospect of more air pollution, especially from Melbourne's rubbish. It's a hard proposal to sell to the local communities so the propaganda/spin machine is on full throttle.

## Federal Court grants temporary injunction to stop VicForests logging 24th April

On 24th April the Federal Court in Melbourne granted a temporary injunction that prevents VicForests from logging in six areas in Victoria's Central Highlands that are home to the threatened Greater Glider.

The urgent application was heard by Justice Steward after an undertaking made previously by VicForests lapsed and the state-owned agency started logging in some areas that are subject to an ongoing case brought by Environmental Justice Australia on behalf of Friends of Leadbeater's Possum.

"This is a good, but temporary, outcome for our forests and their threatened species," said Danya Jacobs, lawyer from Environmental Justice Australia.

"We'll be hard at work as this important case continues to make sure the law is upheld," she said.

The injunction prevents VicForests from logging in five coupes and along one road (to prevent widening), including a controversial coupe near Noojee township.

"We are relieved that the threatened Greater Gliders are safe from the chainsaws for now," said Steve Meacher, President of the Friends of Leadbeater's Possum.

"If the government won't act to protect our forests and their unique creatures, we will," he said.

The injunction is valid until Wednesday 2 May, when a further hearing of the injunction application will proceed before Justice Mortimer in the Federal Court in Melbourne.

VicForests has indicated it will oppose the application on that date.

See also: [Case to proceed to test VicForests' non-compliance with forest agreement](#)

Media Coverage: <https://mountainviews.mailcommunity.com.au/epaper/>



**WA** In March the Western Australian Forest Alliance (WAFA) delivered a petition with 15,500 signatures to Environment Minister Stephen Dawson MLC at Parliament House. The petition calls for the immediate protection of High Conservation Value forests and transition of the timber industry out of native forests in line with the McGowan Government's forest promises.



Photo: Richelle Preisser Speakers included WAFA convener Jess Beckerling, who spoke passionately about the need to protect WA's forests; forest ecologist Associate Professor Grant Wardell Johnson, who listed threats to the forests, and President of the WA Farmers Beekeeping Section Leilani Leyland, who said burning and logging are jeopardising a valuable industry with massive growth potential. The assembled crowd heard that native forest logging operates at a financial loss with low job numbers so it's time for the transition plan set out in WAFA's Forests For Life Plan to be put into place.

**WA conservation groups boycott biased forestry process** 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018 WAFA won't participate in a process run by the Forest Products Commission (FPC) to prepare a Forestry Industry Development Plan for WA. As the plan for the future of the forestry industry in WA, supposed to be developed through an independent process involving all stakeholders is not conforming to ALP Government election policy, WAFA is boycotting it.

The government agency responsible for the sale of logs from State forests and plantations, FPC, is running the show, seeking to gain social licence for ongoing and increased native forest logging. It's five-member review panel is supposed to be independent but includes the chair of the FPC and the CEO of the company that buys karri logs for woodchipping on the panel.

The process purports to have the involvement of environmental groups but they have been expressly excluded, not offered a seat on the review panel or invited to

the November 2017 two-day scenario planning meeting or any other planning sessions. The process has been running since last August. WAFA's first involvement didn't occur until April 2018.

Labor's 2017 Platform commits the government to a process that involves all relevant stakeholders, including conservation groups, *"to reach agreement about the management of forests at a regional landscape level, with a focus on transitioning to a more environmentally and economically sustainable approach to meeting our timber demands."*

WAFA has no confidence that the FPC-led process is capable of developing a strategic plan that will reflect the McGowan government's platform or pre-election commitments on forests, or community concern.

WAFA has already prepared a plan for the future of the



forestry industry in WA. Its Forests For Life Plan for the development of the plantation and farm forestry sector and protection of the native forests has been enthusiastically received and attracted widespread support. It was endorsed by Labor in the lead-up to the 2017 State election at its launches in Perth and the South West but has been ignored by the FPC in its native forest logging-centred process.

WAFA seeks initiation of an independent industry development planning process, in line with Labor's 2017 Platform, that is open, inclusive, rigorous and consensus-oriented. Such a review must be set up separately from the FPC and involve, from its inception,

- Noongar custodians;
- WAFA and other peak environment groups;
- Forest-based businesses and representative groups including honey producers and tourism and recreation operators;
- Independent scientists including those with ecology, biodiversity and climate backgrounds; and
- Small plantation and farm forestry growers.

## NSW: Events leading to renewed resistance against forest destruction

Those monitoring conversion by stealth of NSW native forests to single species dominated landscapes weren't surprised that 'reform' of the NSW RFA regulatory system would attempt to minimize exposition of regulatory breaches while increasing access to native forests.

In March 2014, Steve Hartley, EPA Crown Forestry and Policy Regulatory Officer, justified removal of prescriptions under a '**Remake** of the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals' (IFOAs) that were in the original NSW RFA logging regulations (IFOAs). Although inadequate, those prescriptions, if followed, could afford some protection to threatened species during logging. They were not of course sufficient to prevent the cumulative impacts of industrial logging on a vast scale conducted with unsustainable intensity.

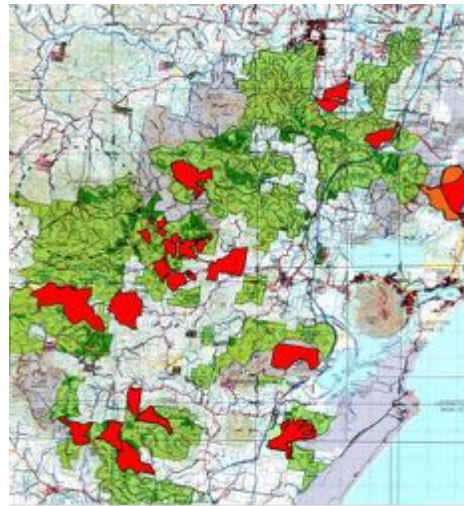
With media coverage of NSW RFA regulatory code breaches intensifying after 2010 Liberal Premier O'Farrell directed the EPA to 'fix' the problem. The only thing not negotiable factor was that there be no diminution in the amount of wood available to corporate clients, despite the 2009 NSW Auditor General finding that "North Coast Forests are being cut faster than they can grow back".

Fulfilling its brief, the EPA argued that as the existing regulations were too detailed, difficult to interpret or enforce, justifying its inaction on breaches, it would move from prescription based to outcome focused oversight. Actions such as checking for threatened species before logging would 'free up resources for monitoring impact'. Also, loggers needn't worry about being fined for breaching regulations under the new system. Section 5.1 of the 'Remake' document stated the new regulatory system would be 'best practice guidelines, not strictly enforceable'. **No breach; no reporting it in the media.**

Straightforward bureaucratic solution until citizen scientist monitoring demonstrated to the EPA just how unsustainable Forests Corporation NSW's (FCNSW) logging was *in reality* with FCNSW's self-assessment of its EPA licensing obligations. Continued media caused the EPA and FCNSW to be alternately at 'loggerheads' and backing each other's stories throughout the '**Remake**' phase.

Nativesrule began reporting FCNSW's flawed silvicultural

practices in 2010, its use of Single Tree Selection (STS)



where the tree to leave is selected, **not** the tree to take.

**Areas in red are public forests clear felled or almost clear felled between Taree and Port Macquarie in a little over a year.**

### **FCNSW had decided to re-interpret the rules**

#### *Nativesrule*

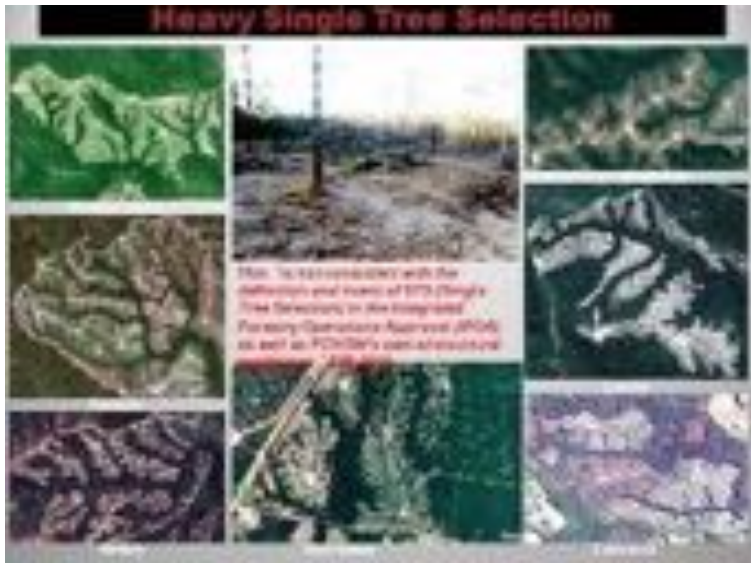
Under heavy STS FCNSW decided it could remove not 40% but 80-90% of basal wood because it was going to provide 'offset' areas. However these offsets weren't areas that wouldn't be logged. They just wouldn't be logged at that time. They were often adjacent to the logging area and scheduled to be logged next time.

Challenged, the Central Planning Manager boasted he could interpret as an offset area any part of or even the entire forest complex comprised of multiple discrete state forests. That such a vast offset area, i.e. tens of thousands of hectares might be logged within a few years, ignoring cumulative impacts, was irrelevant. This was FCNSW interpreting the rules its own way. Thus 'heavy' STS, 'almost' clear fell **was** applied to a whole region as part of a conversion agenda to manipulate NSW north coast native forests to resemble Blackbutt plantations. Forests workers spoke of this agenda freely.

Later, Dailan Pugh of North East Forest Alliance quantified the extent of public forests effectively 'cleared' under this Lower Mid North Coast region. Between 2006 and 2017 it was approximately 23,340 ha.

**Confronted by such evidence the EPA was compelled to admit FCNSW had, in effect, been logging in an illegal manner for over a decade.**

Gary Whytcross, Director of EPA South and Forestry, described Heavy Single Tree Selection as 'not consistent with the definition and intent of STS in Integrated Forestry Operation Approvals (IFOAs) as well as FCNSW's



own silvicultural guidelines.'

Effectively, **the EPA agreed that for over a decade FCNSW had been operating** outside the regulatory framework, **i.e. illegally** but no-one had been able to do anything about it because specific clauses in the existing NSW IFOA legislation meant that citizens **have no redress over illegal govt agency logging and only the govt agency itself and its government regulator can take action - but don't**

**The NSW IFOA precludes legal challenge by a 3rd party.**

Has this been fixed up in the new regulatory system? No, it has not. The new NSW Forestry Bill retains this veto against legal challenge by any 3rd party.

In 2017 the EPA actively supported RFA renewals and the new regulatory system, The Native Forestry Bill (NFB), despite having issued a statement in August just prior to that, that the new bill '*provided for conflicts of interest*'.

*"A draft bill to revamp regulations for native forestry in NSW was slammed as 'overly complex' and inequitable, and it failed to address 'an inherent conflict of interest' in the oversight of state-owned Forestry Corp.*

*"Documents obtained by Fairfax Media show the NSW Environment Protection Authority found the government's draft native forestry bill unfairly favoured Forestry Corp by removing licensing requirements for the corporation while maintaining them for landholders...."*

*"It would also leave the corporation with powers unmatched for a state agency, including its protection from third-party challenges such as from environmental groups."*

*"The inherent conflict of interest for a corporation in having a concurrency role for negotiating, revoking or changing the terms of their licence ... and the removal of third party legal rights, exists nowhere else in NSW legislation or regulation, the EPA's leaked assessment made last December shows."*

This extract from a Sydney Morning Herald article by Peter Hannam, August 7 2017 refers to the IFOA 'reform' process and changes to the Private Native Forestry Code which had morphed into a new piece of legislation (described in the last update), i.e. The NFB.

With The Native Forestry Bill almost complete in late 2017, the government lost no time announcing NSW RFA renewals and proceeding rapidly with minimal scientific or community consultation.

As has occurred elsewhere the state and Commonwealth Governments decreed that mandatory RFA 5-year reviews, not undertaken, could be bundled together and dealt with retrospectively and in parallel with the RFA renewal process. In other words whatever the reviews found was immaterial; RFAs would proceed.

Though no NSW RFA is scheduled for renewal before 2019, the Minister for Lands and Forestry announced on 21st November 2017 that all would proceed, and by February 2018, a woeful round of secret stakeholder meetings was underway. Below is AFCA's February media release about the RFA renewal process, and impacts.



## Most NSW Public Locked Out of Future Plans for Public Forests

*People in Sydney were not given an opportunity to hear about Federal and NSW state government intentions to sign away NSW forests for decades to come via renewals of Regional Forest Agreements, (RFAs).*

*Government termed public ‘Drop In’ sessions regarding RFA renewals were held over the past two weeks in restricted regional centres but there no such public information session was scheduled for Sydney.*

*“The government knows that in the city too many people could find out about the plan to sign away the state’s native forests, and oppose it.*

*‘If RFAs are renewed, our native forests will go the same way as the Great Barrier Reef, warns Frances Pike of the Australian Forests and Climate Alliance.*

*“RFA renewals provide corporations access to the public native forest estate for not only another two decades, but in semi-perpetuity. The government has boasted this time they are structuring RFAs to renew almost automatically, via ‘roll over’ via clauses that permit extensions every 5 years, well beyond the nominal next two decades. This has already happened in Tasmania.*

*“At the same time the NSW government is organising secret wood supply agreements to the corporations which have secured semi-perpetual access to the state’s forest resource. Who knows what flawed ‘supply’ clauses are being inserted into the agreements this time?”*

Since 2014 protests increased. By February 2018 the NSW conservation movement united to boycott the sham RFA Renewal consultations and focus on community action. Protests took place along the length of the NSW coastline wherever public ‘drop-in’ sessions were offered.

To the right is a sample of a few NSW actions.



LISMORE



COFFS HARBOUR



GLADSTONE FOREST BLOCKADE



EDEN IN FRONT OF THE CHIPMILL



**Protests culminated with a march in Sydney** when AFCA raised the profile of forests contribution at the big Time to Choose Climate Rally. The Time to Choose Forests presence was strong in a crowd of 7,000 people. Unfortunately the NSW mainstream media almost fully ig-

nored this event. That was not the case with social media nor did it prevent thousands of people watching the rally from their waiting cars and/or from the footpaths and from buildings as the march progressed over 2 kilometres and then at the park where marchers gathered to hear further messages about coal and CSG – loud and clear. Organisers pointed to the AFCA trailer station where people flocked to sign letters to Premier and opposition leader against RFA renewals.

In the wake of mounting protests was great media as The Guardian exposed RFA impacts, nationally. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/20/regional-forest-agreement-renewals-spark-fresh-forest-wars>

Former NSW environment minister Bob Debus who was involved when RFAs were established was interviewed. His opinion was that RFAs which he believed were “extraordinary and innovative” at the time have been subverted politically, with the states dropping the ball on adequately enforcing environmental oversight and auditing. In 2017 he’d seen what Heavy STS had done to the Lorne state forest, inland from Port Macquarie on the NSW mid-north coast and was horrified.



*“It would seem they’ve been pulling the wool over everyone’s eyes if this type of logging is called forestry. It’s clearing and there’s no scientific justification for it.”*

His assessment of Liberal Party Policy re forests and environment in general was that *“It often seems to me that the Liberal party kind of subcontracts the question of natural resource management to the National party. I know there are exceptions, but they [the Nationals] have an ethic that exploitation is a good thing. They’re less sensitive to those other natural values of our country than the rest of Australia.”*



NSW Labor responded by demanding no RFA renewals without a ‘proper’ assessment. Nice words but what is a ‘proper’ assessment?

That's what the NSW Liberal government claims it is doing right now as it reviews RFAs with view to renewal. After more Guardian articles Federal Labor came out demanding a full 'scientific' assessment: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/29/labor-vows-full-scientific-assessment-of-logging-agreements>

Such statements fall short of the Greens written commitment to end native forest logging , though they provide marginally more hope than current Coalition policy. Promises of more studies when the evidence is already there doesn't bode well. If Labor wants to be taken seriously on forest protection it needs to write it into policy.

**More rallies are planned in coming months. They might be the miracle that delays/prevents NSW RFA renewals in 2018. Contact [cmfisher@tpg.com.au](mailto:cmfisher@tpg.com.au)**



# Industrial Hemp :Part of a Forest Solution

Klara Marosszeky



Though it's never been as important to retain and restore forests, it's the economic health of the logging industry and jobs that rises to prominence in discussions about forest policy. The urgent need to reduce emissions and sequester atmospheric carbon is barely mentioned in policy and political discussion via mainstream media.

A swift transition to appropriate crops such as industrial hemp to aid building and manufacturing would lessen pressure to log forests. 'Forestry' jobs in restoration and expansion of forested areas for the purpose of carbon sequestration and storage would exceed logging jobs.

Hemp is a rapidly emerging industry globally and in Australia. If exploited as a feedstock in Australia for proven applications such as bio-composites, plastics, building materials, paper and twine, hemp agricultural and manufacturing industries would be the source of major employment, and ecological benefits.

Hemp sequesters carbon rapidly, without requiring herbicides. Asian and Australian bred hemp fibre varieties yield 10-15 tonnes per ha and European varieties yield around 10 tonnes per ha in a 4-month farming cycle.

Unlike flax, industrial hemp grows well organically. In Europe application of chemical fertilisers doesn't increase yields sufficiently to justify the cost. Exploring these attributes appeals to sustainable land managers.

Early weed emergence can be managed by measuring soil temperature and planting as soon as the soil warms into a well-prepared seedbed. Due to the density of planting in fibre production, a hemp crop achieves canopy closure within 6 weeks. Hemp is easy to grow and not too complex to harvest.

European data indicates a 1 tonne per hectare (UK data) per ha of additional carbon is locked into soils through the leaf and stubble remaining in field.

Machines are available for processing hemp biomass but there is room for Australian innovation. Much research is being undertaken on Australian farms at the moment with commercialization of hemp finally approved in all states. (South Australian approval was granted last year; just the Northern Territory to go.) If this rapidly produced biomass is manufactured into durable products and infrastructure, the end result is the creation of carbon sinks.

Hemp housing can be better than carbon neutral.



Current inefficiencies bring the carbon footprint of the Australian building industry to about 30% of emissions. Industrial Hemp can help with this.

Hemp is excellent in a farm rotation, with 10 – 20% increased yield in wheat crops. In the NSW Central Tablelands, in Ashford, farmers found an Australian variety required about a third the amount of water as lucerne. Though yield in general increases with irrigation many Australian farmers are growing dryland crops. Hemp is also climate resilient withstanding typhoons in Japan.

Hemp is used as a soil bio-remediator. In Europe it's used to take up soil contaminants including heavy metals, and radioactive contaminants in arable land. In Australia it's been shown to be an excellent mop crop for management of tertiary treated sewage water. If it's about jobs, or about the land, or more ecologically friendly products, or preserving forests, the opportunity is here. *Klara Marosszeky is Managing Director of the Australian Hemp Masonry Company, a member of the Australian Industrial Hemp Alliance. See refs for article overleaf.*



Hemp House at Mudgee NSW

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gil\\_Gorchs/publication/277233194\\_Hemp\\_rotation\\_effect\\_on\\_wheat\\_Triticum\\_aestivum\\_L\\_and\\_effect\\_of\\_some\\_management\\_practices\\_nitrogen\\_fertilisation\\_seeding\\_rate\\_and\\_harvest\\_date\\_on\\_fibre\\_hemp\\_Cannabis\\_sativa\\_L\\_production/links/558d5d2908aeadd5836dd482/Hemp-rotation-effect-on-wheat-Triticum-aestivum-L-and-effect-of-some-management-practices-nitrogen-fertilisation-seeding-rate-and-harvest-date-on-fibre-hemp-Cannabis-sativa-L-production.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gil_Gorchs/publication/277233194_Hemp_rotation_effect_on_wheat_Triticum_aestivum_L_and_effect_of_some_management_practices_nitrogen_fertilisation_seeding_rate_and_harvest_date_on_fibre_hemp_Cannabis_sativa_L_production/links/558d5d2908aeadd5836dd482/Hemp-rotation-effect-on-wheat-Triticum-aestivum-L-and-effect-of-some-management-practices-nitrogen-fertilisation-seeding-rate-and-harvest-date-on-fibre-hemp-Cannabis-sativa-L-production.pdf)  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12655808>  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0265931X05000160>  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/scienceshow/mop-crops/3458774>

Tip: **ZERO CARBON HOMES** energy efficient architecture

## Threats to Forests—National Update

### Nil Tenure/Tenure Neutral and downgrading environmental protection legislation

The Nil Tenure thrust is championed federally by the Nationals via the Forest Industry Advisory Council (FIAC). Individual National Party MPs at state level also challenge protective tenure with little resistance from the Liberal Party at either level. FIAC recommends:

- allowing loggers access to protected areas (already happening in a NSW National Park)
- having forestry agencies and/or primary industry departments manage **all** forests regardless of tenure
- ‘thinning/logging’ forests under the guise of ecological restoration and/or bushfire mitigation

Agribusiness interests championed by the Nationals influence Coalition policy. Environmental legislation formerly providing some protection for forests and woodlands via state native vegetation clearing laws is being unravelled.

Liberal state governments also accommodate developer pressure to remove barriers to native vegetation and tree clearing. Pseudo - compensatory ‘offset’ schemes that rarely result in protection from biodiversity loss are the rhetoric by which this occurs. Here’s how offset schemes operate in NSW: [https://www.nature.org.au/media/265228/bio-offsetting-report\\_v14.pdf](https://www.nature.org.au/media/265228/bio-offsetting-report_v14.pdf)

Pressure from developers is also reviving attempts to further commercialise/privatise national parks.

**NSW leads the ‘nil tenure’ charge** with Nationals’ effective in attaining commercial logging of Murray Valley National Park under the guise of ‘ecological’ thinning.

The *Native Vegetation Act 2003* (NVA) that Labor Premier, Bob Carr laboured over for almost a decade, has been relentlessly undermined by the National Party. Bowing to National Party MPs, Liberal Premier Mike Baird agreed to remove the NVA. This culminated in the (erroneously titled) *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2017*, and Native Vegetation ‘codes’, codes that facilitate almost unbridled clearing. <https://www.theland.com.au/story/3884356/nsw-set-to-chop-into-native-veg-laws/>

The Baird government’s proposed changes were condemned by scientists and conservationists. Freedom of information documents revealed the Office of Environment and Heritage warned the Environment Minister the laws could see a spike in land clearing and protected less than 1% of koala habitat on private land.

Succeeding Liberal Premier Gladys Berijikian progressed ‘Re-make’ of the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW, represented by EDO NSW, challenged and won a case against this code on the basis that Primary Industries Minister Niall Blair didn’t have the Environment Minister’s sign off when it was introduced that could ensure environment is taken into account before bringing the new laws into affect. Sadly, the government quickly rectified this error and now unbridled clearing is law in NSW.



NSW Premier Gladys Berijikian's effigy attended Sydney's recent march against climate change and nature destruction.

**Northern Territory:** 'From 2003 to 2009, between 10,000 and 20,000 hectares of native vegetation was cleared each year across the Territory. Most native vegetation was bulldozed to expand pastoral production by replacing trees with exotic pasture grasses, particularly in the Daly River catchment and on the Sturt Plateau, and for an agroforestry plantation on Melville Island.' (Environment Centre Northern Territory, ECNT website)

ECNT has launched a Supreme Court action challenging the NT EPA and Pastoral Board approval process for the 2017 decision to permit clearing of 20,432 ha of forest and native vegetation. <http://ecnt.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NT-Deforestation-Court-Case-Media-Release-March-2018.pdf>

## Queensland:

**Background:** *The Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA) put some blocks on broadscale land clearing. It was strengthened to prohibit broadscale clearing between 2004-6. High value regrowth protection was added in 2009.

In 2012-3 the Liberal Newman government broke 2012 election promises not to weaken these laws. It reduced enforcement, added permits for so-called (irrigated) high value agriculture that realloow broadscale clearing for grazing and deprotects high value regrowth.

The Newman government released no clearing data between 2012-16. Labor's Palaszczuk government has released two reports for 4 sets of data showing how dramatic the rise in clearing has been. Since 2012 1.2 million ha were cleared. Data for 2015-16 data show 395,000 ha cleared, a 33% increase on the previous year). 40% was in GBR catchments, a 45% increase on the previous year.

Labor introduced a Bill in 2016 to restore the VMA as it had been, but being a minority government, it had little juggling capacity or prospect of passing the Bill and it was defeated.

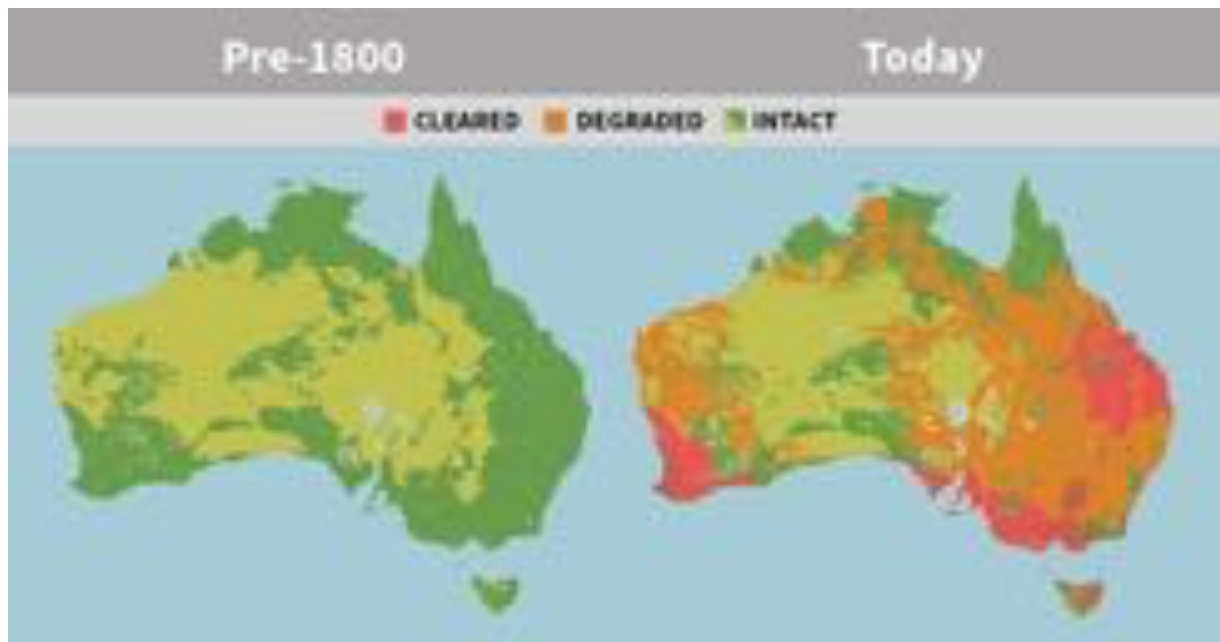
In 2017 the Palaszczuk government won the election on a clear platform with commitments for much stronger clearing laws.

It introduced a Bill in March to remove (irrigated) high value agriculture, reprotect high value regrowth under better definition, thinning as self assessment based clearing, phase out of Area Management Plans, and place minor restrictions on fodder harvesting.

In April 2018 the Bill was referred to a Committee for Inquiry with about 14,000 submissions, most of which are expected to support the bill. The Committee Inquiry report on the Bill is due on April 23.



# Australian Forest 'Management' Since 1800



**'Deforestation is exploding across the Northern Territory, joining the clearing frenzy sweeping Australia'**, Shar Molloy from ENCT regarding an NT govt permit to clear over 20 ,400 hectares

## **BUT ! - Some Late Good News !!**

Glenn Walker of the Wilderness Society made some comments regarding the passing of laws that re-introduce restraints to prevent broadscale land clearing.

On 3rd May, the Queensland Parliament passed deforestation laws restoring pre-Premier Campbell Newman protections which his government took away. In some places the new laws provide more protection to regenerating forest.

A Queensland government estimate is that current emissions from land clearing are 45 Mt / annum, equivalent to \*roughly\* 1/3rd (or a bit under) of Australia's domestic coal-fired power emissions.

Not to mention the 45 million native animals killed each year, damage to rivers, The Reef and other impacts.

Some loopholes clearing will still permit some clearing but the expectation is that it will reduce substantially, particularly in relation to the most mature forest and bushland where the laws are strongest. In annual emission terms his development is akin to shutting down 1-2 Hazelwood scale coal plants.

Responding to Wilderness Society advocacy, the Queensland Government had also committed at the last election to a \$500m Land Restoration Fund for biodiversity and climate outcomes via landholder regeneration projects. Hopefully further carbon drawdown benefits from that too.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/may/04/queensland-passes-land-clearing-laws-after-gruelling-three-day-debate>

## ***The Insidious Threat to our Natural Heritage: proposals to develop National Parks***

*In a 2013 Sydney Morning Herald article scientists argued against Victorian Liberal Party attempts to introduce into national parks uses anathema to protection. <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/the-insidious-threat-to-our-natural-heritage-20130818-2s4uk.html>. That article concerned the Victorian Naphthine Liberal government's proposals but is relevant to proposals supported by the Tasmanian Liberal government.*

*Now Tasmania's World Heritage Area is under threat and re-zoning of an area at Lake Malbena in the Tasmanian Highlands from Wilderness to Self Reliant Recreation Zone had been approved by the Liberal state government.*

*[www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-11/wha-rezone-draft-plan-announced-at-frenchmans-cap-unveiling/9640630](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-11/wha-rezone-draft-plan-announced-at-frenchmans-cap-unveiling/9640630)*

*Bob Brown comments on this National Parks privatisation move in The Mercury, April 19.*

*'National Parks Minister Will Hodgman is on trajectory to effectively privatise Tasmania's previously protected national parks....the plan for three "lean luxury" cabins plus communal kitchen and toilets on tiny Halls Island in picturesque Lake Malbena, serviced by helicopters, has moved quietly forward to the point that only the federal*

*Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg's agreement is needed.*

*It will be interesting to see if Federal Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg accedes to what will likely involve re-zoning in National Parks.*

### ***Mechanical Fuel Load Reduction (MFLR)***

*Trials are being conducted in NSW, Victoria and WA. The burning component of the trials still hasn't taken place. Burns scheduled for October re-scheduled for Autumn couldn't take place because it was considered too dangerous. They could occur any time. After the fire component of the trials occurs, economic and environmental costs/benefits are to be assessed and compared with other methods of fire control.*

*It isn't clear if or how the trials might prevent implementation of the federal bushfire mitigation programme as envisaged under MFLR. Implications of MFLR for forests nationally are discussed in AFCA's 2017 Spring Update.*

## ***Want a quick introduction to social media networking ?***

***AFCA's new website***

***EMAIL***

***TWITTER***

***Reminder about our FACEBOOK***

***See next page***







## OUR NEW WEBSITE

Please take a look and start sending info to share on resources and or threat and impact pages - or other suggestions

**AFCA Email:** [afca.forests@gmail.com](mailto:afca.forests@gmail.com)

**AFCA facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/forestsandclimate/>

**Twitter @AFCA\_Forests:** [https://twitter.com/AFCA\\_Forests](https://twitter.com/AFCA_Forests)

As a national network for forest and climate campaigners around the country AFCA will promote forest campaigns and events, share news from member groups and increase the profile of our native forests as a climate solution across the national media landscape.

To do this effectively we will need your help to grow a national social media network to raise the profile of native forests in the media and to put forests and climate on any upcoming election agenda.

### **If you'd like to join the AFCA social media network read on...**

AFCA uses Facebook and Twitter which can be very effective if a group of people join together to share daily posts or tweets. If enough people join in, our chosen topic can start "trending" and alert even more people to the forests and climate issue or to a state campaign event or news item.

### **Using #Hashtags in your tweets or posts**

When you include a hashtag (#) in front of a word or phrase this creates a search link

e.g. #Forests4Climate Clicking on this hashtag finds every tweet containing that hashtag. You can also search using 2 hashtags e.g, #Forests4Climate #nswpol which will find any tweet containing both terms. You can add any number of hashtags to your posts or tweets (up to 280 characters) to help others in your network find and retweet posts.

Popular hashtags on twitter include: State politics e.g, #nswpol, #sapol, #springst (Vic), #politas, #qldpol, #wapol or Federal politics #auspol #AusSenate #AusBudget. Happy tweeting.

### **Send information to AFCA using:**

Email: [afca.forests@gmail.com](mailto:afca.forests@gmail.com) (use the subject line SOCIAL MEDIA)

Follow AFCA on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/forestsandclimate/>

Send us a message on the AFCA Facebook page or TAG us in your posts (type: "@Australian Forests and Climate Alliance" and select AFCA from the drop down list to TAG us and Facebook will let us know).

Follow AFCA on Twitter: [https://twitter.com/AFCA\\_Forests](https://twitter.com/AFCA_Forests) or TAG us in your twitter posts using @AFCA\_Forests to alert us to your tweet.

See you online!