

# Media Release

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## VAFI calls for reconsideration of draft national park proposals

The Victorian Association of Forest Industries' Chief Executive Officer, Tim Johnston, has expressed disappointment in draft proposals by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) to create an extensive suite of new national parks in Victoria's west.

Mr Johnston said that the draft proposals to create new national parks in the Wombat, Wellsford and Pyrenees Ranges State forests would have negative impacts on local businesses and communities.

"These proposals will severely impact the local harvesters and processors that rely on the high quality timber sourced from these forests", said Mr Johnston.

"These forests are extensively used by local communities for a wide range of activities, including sustainable timber harvesting and firewood collecting", said Mr Johnston.

In addition, VEAC has proposed converting 28% of Mt Cole State forest to national park or nature reserves.

"Currently in the Mount Cole State forest, approximately 8 hectares sustainably harvested and regrown annually. It is unclear what impact this draft proposal will have", he said.

"This timber is harvested and processed by community businesses and removing this supply will severely impact livelihoods. Furthermore, creating a national park will restrict a range of recreational activities, such as dog walking and off-road driving."

"The timber and forestry industry is invested in improving forest health. The current approach to forest management has been successful at maintaining environmental and social value of the forest and is supported by local residents", he said.

VAFI calls on VEAC to undertake a comprehensive socio-economic assessment of these proposals and revise or remove them accordingly before making final recommendations, to minimise detrimental effects on communities.

"VEAC has the opportunity to make genuinely progressive recommendations that balance forest health with a sustainable source of an essential, economical, low-carbon product for construction and technological innovation. I hope the members of VEAC will consider these issues before making final recommendations in 2019." Mr Johnston said.

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