

*Interim:*

# VICTORIAN PLANTATION MANAGEMENT POSITION STATEMENT

(April 2001)

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## SECTION ONE

### Introduction

#### 1. OBJECTIVES

The Victorian Plantation Management Reference Group affirms the following policy objectives adopted at the 1999 National Forest Summit:

- The forest movement condemns the clearing of native forests to establish plantations;
- The forest movement supports the utilisation of existing plantations to ease the pressure on native forests;
- The forest movement will actively encourage improvement in environmental management practices within those plantations;
- The forest movement will undertake research to identify limits to further establishment of industrial plantations;
- The forest movement opposes the export of unprocessed plantation logs;
- The forest movement opposes the intensification of native forest management.

We believe that these objectives can be achieved by strengthening planning controls, improving plantation management systems, requiring government and commercial accountability and ensuring that the global trading system does not compromise environmental objectives.

#### 2. SCOPE AND USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

- 2.1. The principles outlined in this position statement aim to set a standard of environmentally sound management for plantations which is worlds-best-practice.
- 2.2. The principles outlined in this position statement do not constitute a certification standard.
- 2.3. Support for the principles outlined in this position statement by environmental groups does not imply that native forest campaigners do not support the use of the existing plantation resource.
- 2.4. Implementation of these principles is intended to complement native forest conservation objectives.
- 2.5. We recognise that all agricultural production needs to shift to a socially and environmentally sustainable footing. In setting a high planning and environmental framework for plantations we are aiming to encourage the plantation sector to lead the way for the agricultural sector. We are aware that the applicability of these principles with regard to small-scale farm forestry may still need to be addressed.
- 2.6. We also recognise that there may be other important issues which are not yet addressed by this position statement. The relationship between plantation establishment, carbon sequestration and climate change is one such issue. Another is the growing salinity crisis, where the broad-scale, strategic revegetation of the landscape is required to restore hydrological balance, protect biodiversity and secure the future of rural communities.
- 2.7. We strongly encourage policy-setting bodies including governments, industry, unions, water authorities and non-government organisations to engage with this position statement when considering the plantation issue in their processes of policy development. Policy setting bodies are welcome to adopt this document verbatim.

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## SECTION TWO Planning

### 3. PLANNING CONTROLS

- 3.1. During the feasibility assessment phase for all projects the cumulative impact of the plantation within a catchment will be identified and a cost benefit analysis should be undertaken prior to commencement.
- 3.2 Planning controls are needed to determine the location and extent of plantations to avoid adverse impacts at a catchment/landscape scale (e.g. catchment hydrology, fire regimes, fire protection strategies, potential wildlife corridors and priority revegetation areas.)
- 3.3 Plantations should not be regarded as an "as of right" development. Planning permits through local government planning schemes must be included for existing and newly established plantations.
- 3.4 All stages of planning must be developed under the auspices of the planning approvals processes required by Catchment Management Authorities and local government entities.

## SECTION THREE Management

### 4. MANAGEMENT PLANS

- 4.1 The management objectives of a plantation shall be explicitly stated in the management plan, and clearly demonstrated in the implementation of the plan.
- 4.2 All stages of planning must be developed in open and inclusive consultation and active participation with all relevant stakeholders including indigenous people, local councils, resident, community and environmental groups, workers and unions, scientists and investors.
- 4.3 Management plans must be able to demonstrate the manner in which stakeholder consultation has been taken into account.
- 4.4 Management plans should include data regarding soil properties (especially relating to erodability and transportation of sediment) and slopes within the plantation.
- 4.5 Management plans should include data regarding water quality and yields within and flowing from the plantation, and include a cost-benefit analysis on plantation water use.
- 4.6 Management and operational plans (e.g. coupe plans) must be made available for public inspection and comment at local council offices. In addition, councils must ensure that these plans are mailed to stakeholder groups, are available to be copied and can be easily located on the internet.

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## **5. DESIGN OF PLANTATIONS**

- 5.1 The design and layout of plantations must promote the protection, restoration and conservation of the environment and biodiversity, and decrease pressures on ecosystems including native forests and other indigenous vegetation communities.
- 5.2 Wildlife corridors, streamside zones and a mosaic of stands of different ages and rotation periods shall be used in the layout of the plantation. The scale and layout of plantations shall be consistent with the patterns of forest stands found within the natural landscape.
- 5.3 Diversity in the composition of plantations is essential, so as to enhance positive economic, ecological and social outcomes. Such diversity may include the size and spatial distribution of management units within the landscape, number and genetic composition of species, age classes and structures.

## **6. PLANTATION SPECIES**

- 6.1. In order to enhance the conservation of biological diversity, indigenous species are preferred over other species in the establishment of plantations and the restoration of degraded ecosystems.
- 6.2. Plantations shall be carefully monitored to detect unusual mortality, disease, insect outbreaks and adverse ecological impacts including proliferation of exotic weeds, genetic pollution of native species and biodiversity impacts.
- 6.3. The selection of species for planting shall be based on their overall suitability for the site and their appropriateness to the objectives negotiated in the management plan.
- 6.4. Plantations shall not use genetically modified organisms.

## **7. PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF NATIVE FOREST**

- 7.1. Native forests, woodlands, remnant trees on agricultural land, grasslands and other indigenous ecosystems shall not be cleared or otherwise modified to make way for plantations.
- 7.2. A proportion (Catchment Management Authorities recommend 30%) of the overall forest management area shall have environmentally targeted areas, appropriate to the scale of the plantation and to be determined in local/regional standards. These areas shall be managed so as to restore the site to native vegetation cover.
- 7.3. A range of incentive schemes should be made available to facilitate the conversion of existing monoculture-plantations into mixed species, uneven aged plantations.
- 7.4. A proportion of monies raised from commercial forestry activities must be explicitly set aside for native forest conservation and restoration.

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## **8. PROTECTION OF SOIL AND WATERWAYS**

- 8.1. Ecologically sound measures must be taken to maintain or improve soil structure, fertility and biological activity.
- 8.2. Accurate models which relate sediment yield to soil type and slope and the type of erosion likely to occur need to be developed and supported by plantation operations and government instrumentalities.
- 8.3. Existing plantations in sensitive areas such as steep slopes (greater than 20 degrees), along streambanks, springs, drainage lines and important recharge areas shall be retired from timber production and restored to the original vegetation cover.
- 8.4. The techniques and rate of harvesting, road and track construction and maintenance, and the choice of species and rotation lengths shall not result in long term soil degradation or adverse impacts on water quality, quantity or substantial deviation from stream course drainage patterns and aquifers.
- 8.5. Roading is the main input source of sediment entering streams, therefore, operations of machinery and trucks must take account of weather conditions, both wet and dry, which aggravate sediment movement.
- 8.6. Plantation operations must not impact upon fish and macroinvertebrate populations and aquatic ecosystems, due to sedimentation, lost runoff, chemical use, salinity and thermal changes.
- 8.7. Plantations shall be managed to produce uneven aged class distribution, except where it can be demonstrated that it will have an adverse impact upon some species.
- 8.8. Responsible water authorities should receive royalties for plantation water usage above natural vegetation levels, at rates equivalent to those of local irrigators.

## **9. PEST MANAGEMENT**

- 9.1. Ecologically sound measures shall be taken to identify, prevent and manage outbreaks of pests, diseases, fire and invasive plant introductions.
- 9.2. Prior to establishing plantations, risk assessment should be undertaken for diseases such as myrtle wilt, needle blight, guava rust, cinnamon fungus and honey fungus.
- 9.3. Integrated pest management shall form an essential part of the management plan, with primary reliance on prevention and safe biological and manual control methods rather than chemical biocides and fertilizers.
- 9.4. Plantation management must reduce their reliance upon chemical biocides, including their use in nurseries.
- 9.5. Aerial application of herbicides will be banned. Herbicides will only be used as part of a strict management strategy.

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- 9.6. Chemical residues must not enter waterways especially in domestic water supply catchments. Water testing will be undertaken especially after a heavy rainfall event by responsible water authorities.
  - 9.7. Commercial forestry operators and government authorities shall be responsible for the elimination of environmental weeds in adjacent indigenous ecosystems and other adjacent land. Management plans must contain routinely scheduled removal of environmental weeds.
  - 9.8. Native animals shall not be harmed or killed with poisons such as 1080. Browsing will be controlled using alternative methods such as tree guards and olfactory repellents.

## **10. OTHER CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

- 10.1. Fertilisers containing sulphuric acid shall not be used.
- 10.2. Commercial forestry operators will be accountable for all chemical treatments used during the growing phase of plantations as well as in end products.

## **SECTION FOUR** **Accountability**

## **11. SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 11.1. Monitoring of plantations shall include regular, government funded, social, environmental, economic and heritage impact assessments conducted on a local and regional basis. Plantations must not be approved if there are significant adverse environmental and social impacts.
- 11.2. Special attention will be paid to social issues of land acquisition for plantations, especially the protection of community values and amenity, use or access, including the land management and access rights of indigenous people.
- 11.3. Special attention will be paid to indigenous peoples' values assessments, and will be inclusive of archeological and native title considerations. Assessments will recognise how changes to an area could impact upon indigenous peoples' environmental cultural knowledge and the utilisation of that knowledge.
- 11.4. Monitoring of plantations shall include regular assessment of potential on-site and off-site ecological impacts, (e.g. natural regeneration, effects on water resources and soil fertility) within an integrated catchment framework.
- 11.5. No species shall be planted on a large scale until local trials and/or experience have shown that they are ecologically well adapted to the site, are not invasive, and do not have significant negative ecological impacts on other ecosystems.
- 11.6. In the unlikely event that an endangered species is found or becomes established in a plantation the area should be protected, the land owner compensated and a study undertaken to determine the ecological requirements of the species.

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**12. ENVIRONMENTAL AND HERITAGE PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

- 12.1. Information from a standardised environmental reporting system will be made available to any investors and the public.
- 12.2. Details of performance in relation to significant environmental and heritage regulations shall be included in the financial statements of commercial forestry corporations and made available to investors and the public.
- 12.3. There shall be mandatory auditing of information included in the standardised environmental reports, and mandatory auditing of environmental information contained in financial statements of commercial forestry corporations.
- 12.4. An environmental auditing system appropriate to smaller farm forestry operations and plantation owners will be developed and adhered to, except operations within plantation portfolio systems.

## SECTION FIVE Global Systems

**13. VALUE ADDING AND GLOBAL TRADE**

- 13.1. Governments must not allow the global trading system to undermine domestic decisions to introduce local usage, value adding and job creation programs, export log quotas, subsidies and incentives for reforestation, recycling and emission control policies, certification and ecolabelling initiatives, and protection against exotic pests and diseases.

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## *Appendix 1*

### Key Terms

**"Commercial forestry"** means commercial tree growing on all scales, land tenures and silvicultural regimes.

**"Indigenous peoples' values"** means the social, cultural and environmental heritage of indigenous people. These can include connection to country through stories, places and spirituality, and may be environmentally based such as knowledge and utilisation of specific flora and fauna species.

**"Indigenous species"** means native plants which naturally occur (or once occurred) in a specific location.

**"Plantation"** means an area of land, other than a native vegetation area, on which a predominant number of canopy trees have been planted for commercial timber production.

**"Uneven-Age Management"** means the practice of having a mixture of trees/species of varying ages with staggered harvesting operations (single stem or group selection) at various root depths.

## *Appendix 2*

### Selected References

#### Relevant Documents

- *Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision* (Commonwealth October 1997)
- *Private Forestry in Victoria: Strategy Towards 2020* (Victoria May 1998)
- *Private Forestry Victoria - The Right Trees in the Right Places, Towards 2020, Focusing on 2001-2004* (current draft discussion paper, NRE Private Forestry Strategy, Victoria 2001)
- *Prescriptions for the Control of Timber Production and Other Forest Uses* (NRE 1998)
- *Management Prescriptions for Timber Production and Other Forest Uses* (NRE 1998)
- *Predicting Water Yield Impacts of Forest Disturbance in the Maroondah and Thomson Catchments* (Cooperative Research Centre for Catchment Hydrology, Technical Report 0/14, December 2000)
- *Managing Sediment Sources and Movement in Forest Catchments* (November 1999)

#### Relevant Victorian Legislation

- *Victorian Plantations Corporation Act 1993*
- *Victorian Plantations Corporation (Amendment) Act 1998*
- *Forestry Rights Act 1996*
- *Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996*
- *Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production* (December 1996)
- *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*
- *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*
- *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*
- *Forests Act 1958*

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### *Appendix 3*

## Victorian Plantation Management Reference Group

This position statement has been drafted by the Victorian Plantation Management Reference Group (VPMRG) which has the following members.

Serena O'Meley (Convenor VPMRG) - *West Victorian Forest Protection Network, Earthworker, Geelong Community Forum*  
 Peter O'Mara - *West Victorian Forest Protection Network, Wombat Forest Society*  
 Adrian Whitehead - *Geelong-based forest activist*  
 Gavin McFadzean - *The Wilderness Society*  
 Liz Ingham - *Concerned Residents of East Gippsland*  
 Loris Duclos - *Tambo Environment Awareness Group, Wombat Forest Society*  
 Lindsay Hesketh - *Australian Conservation Foundation*  
 Darren Gladman - *Environment Victoria*  
 Tim Anderson - *Wombat Forest Society*  
 John Poppins - *Paperlinx Green Shareholders Group*  
 Anthony Amis - *Friends of the Earth (Victoria)*  
 Michelle van Gerrevink – *Goongerah Environment Centre*

The group acknowledges the contribution of Charmaine Clarke (Gunditjmara); Tim Cadman (Native Forest Network); Stuart McCallum, Mark Trengove and Bruce Fletcher (Geelong Community Forum); Harry van Moorst (Western Regional Environment Centre); Charlie Sherwin and Corey Watts (Australian Conservation Foundation); Tony Norton (RMIT University); Virginia Young (The Wilderness Society); and Trevor Poulton for their comments on the draft position statement.

At the 2000 National Forest Summit it was recognised that the policy objectives adopted at the 1999 National Forest Summit (see Section One) needed to be elaborated upon to produce a detailed position on plantation management. At its February 2001 general meeting, the West Victorian Forest Protection Network decided to take up the challenge of co-ordinating an inclusive process of policy development on the plantation issue.

The development of a Victorian position on plantation management has been urgent due to the absence of environmental prescriptions within State and Federal Government policy on plantation establishment. *The Private Forestry Council (Victoria)* is currently reviewing its plantation policy so this is an important moment for the Environment Movement to present them with directions on environmental management issues.

In April 2001 a preliminary draft document, compiled from a range of policy sources and egroup (electronic mailing list) discussions, was written and circulated by e-mail to interested individuals from the two main Victorian forest campaign egroups. Individuals with specialist knowledge were also approached for their advice. Suggestions from participants were incorporated into the document or were held over for discussion.

On April 7 2001, the Victorian Plantation Management Reference Group met for the first time and worked through the draft document. A further two weeks of personal consultation with individual campaigners saw the completion of the *Interim* Victorian Plantation Management Position Statement (April 2001).

At the National Forest Summit (27-29 April 2001) the following motion was passed "The National Forest Summit welcomes the work of the Victorian Plantation Management Reference Group towards developing a joint position on plantations and encourages interested Victorian groups to become involved."

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The *Interim* Victorian Plantation Management Position Statement (April 2001) is endorsed by the following campaign groups:

*West Victorian Forest Protection Network, Friends of the Earth (Victoria), Concerned Residents of East Gippsland, Geelong Community Forum, Western Region Environment Centre, Paperlinx Green Shareholders Group, Tambo Environment Awareness Group, Wombat Forest Society, Environment Victoria, Enfield Forest Alliance, Goongerah Environment Centre, Portland Field Naturalists Club, Otway Ranges Environment Network, Cobaw and Wombat Forest Action Group.*

The *Australian Conservation Foundation* and *The Wilderness Society*, which both have national campaign obligations, support the development of this position statement and will be referring it back through their consultative bodies for comment and endorsement.

The Victorian Plantation Management Reference Group recognises that the development of a joint position on such a complex issue is an ongoing process which requires extensive and sensitive consultation with all stakeholders. Further development of this position statement will be undertaken in consultation with participating groups.

For information about joining the reference group, to comment upon or endorse the *Interim* Victorian Plantation Management Position Statement (April 2001), and to raise additional issues which the reference group might address please write to:

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#### *Appendix 4*

### Future Directions

The Victorian Plantation Management Reference Group will:

- Develop a joint position paper on the state of plantation management in Australia.
- Participate in the review of Code of Forest Practices in relation to commercial forestry. Copies of the *Interim* Victorian Plantation Management Position Statement (April 2001) will be sent to the review panel with the addition of points to be covered for redrafting.
- Assess the implementation by State governments and local councils of the Federal Government's "Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision" policy statement, <http://www.affa.gov.au/docs/forestry/plantations/vision.html> . The Victorian Government's position can be found in "Private Forestry in Victoria: Strategy towards 2020 (May 1998)." <http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/forestry/private/strategy/> (Currently being reviewed.)
- Meet with the Private Forestry Council (Victoria) and seek to have this position statement taken into account in their 'Strategy Implementation Plans' which are currently non-prescriptive in relation to environmental management.
- Assess the environmental and economic issues relating to alternative fibre sources, particularly for paper and chipboard production.
- Explore certification issues, including Forest Stewardship Council versus government certification.
- Develop a joint position on greenhouse gas emission policies in relation to plantations. See the Climate Action Network October 2000 policy paper at <http://www.climateaustralia.org/policy04.html>
- Investigate the potential for organic or biodynamic certification for plantations.
- Review ethical investment programs in relation to plantations.
- Evaluate the use of plantations for salinity control.
- Promote this position statement to policy-setting bodies.