

CONSERVATION VALUES OF STATE FORESTS INVESTIGATION: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 26B of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Council to carry out an assessment of the conservation values of state forests¹ in the Central Highlands, North East, Gippsland and East Gippsland regional forest agreement areas.

The purpose of the investigation is to:

- (a) identify the biodiversity and ecological values in the specified area
- (b) identify the current and likely future threats to these values
- (c) report on public land use and management.

The Council is required to take into consideration landscape-wide biodiversity at the relevant state, regional and local levels, including biodiversity and ecological values in existing protected areas and other public land.

The Council must take into account the following matters:

- (i) relevant agreements under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*
- (ii) relevant Victorian government policies and strategies
- (iii) relevant national and international agreements, policies and strategies
- (iv) relevant regional programs, strategies and plans.

The Council is required to consult with the Forest Industry Taskforce.

In addition, as specified in section 26D of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must confer with any Department or public authority which may be affected by the provision of the assessment including VicForests, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources; and the departments and public authorities must give practicable assistance to the Council in preparing the assessment.

The Council must report on the completed investigation as soon as practicable but by no later than 28 February 2017.

¹ For the purposes of this assessment, state forest is defined as the areas of public land depicted as General Management Zone, Special Management Zone and Special Protection Zone in the maps accompanying the regional forest agreements as updated from time to time and expressed in the DELWP forest zoning data set (FMZ 100) as at the time of commencement of the investigation.