

Strathbogie Sustainable Forestry Alliance,  
Post Office,  
Strathbogie, 3666  
August 4, 2014

Hon Peter Walsh  
State Minister for Agriculture and Food Security  
State Minister for Water  
Parliament of Victoria  
Level 16, 8 Nicholson St  
East Melbourne, 3002

Cc: Stephanie Ryan  
National Party Candidate for Euroa

Dear Minister Walsh:

We are writing to on behalf of the Strathbogie Sustainable Forestry Alliance. This is a group comprised of local interested residents, land owners, Landcare members and former local foresters. Our members are aligned with a number of local groups in the surrounding area plus a very wide cross section of the local community. This has been amply demonstrated by large attendances at community meetings.

The Strathbogie Sustainable Forestry Alliance is not opposed to logging *per se*, but we are very concerned about VicForests' plans for logging in the remaining areas of Strathbogie native forests. The area of concern is known as the Strathbogie State Forest and is bounded by the districts of Swanpool, Warrenbayne, Strathbogie and Bonnie Doon.

Our reasons for concern include the following:

- VicForests has demonstrated an inability to rehabilitate local forest areas recently logged.
- In silvicultural terms, forest product in this area is of low quality and generates poor economic returns.
- To date, VicForests' practices locally have provided minimal fiscal return to our area.
- Over 9000 hectares of our finest local forests have already been sacrificed to commercial plantation industries that do appear to be financially viable.
- The areas available for logging represent some of the highest biodiversity value forests remaining in the entire Strathbogie Ranges. These areas are also

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extensively used for recreation, ecotourism, outdoor education and a variety of other pursuits.

- The area is vital to apiarists, whose contribution to pollination services within the Goulburn Valley and associated river lands is crucial for much farming enterprise and, by extension, our greater food security.
- Use of these forests for subsidized, low-value timber products (e.g. firewood, biofuel) represents unfair competition for regional farm forestry enterprises that could create local jobs and contribute to the local economy.
- Overall, the economic case for not harvesting native forest in this area appears stronger than the case for harvesting.
- There has been no assessment of land-use or forest values in the Strathbogie Ranges for 30 years, in which time the world has changed.

We are asking you to remove Strathbogie State Forests from the current Timber Release Plan or otherwise provide for a moratorium on forestry in this area until a full enquiry into land management and forestry practices in the region is undertaken by VEAC (Victorian Environmental Assessment Council).

Attached is a more detailed list of related issues that we have highlighted for your consideration.

We are more than happy to meet with you at any time to discuss our concerns. Our local National Party candidate, Stephanie Ryan, has already met with us and is aware of the issues that we are raising.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

John O'Brien

Dana Last

Terry Frewin

Michael Spencer

Et al

(on behalf of Strathbogie Sustainable Forestry Alliance)