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## Logging review could come too late, residents warn

By [Miki Perkins](#) and [Mike Foley](#)

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“What remains after the fires is critical to protect, especially for threatened species,” says Gippsland Environment Group member Louise\*, speaking from her home north of Bairnsdale in the Tambo forest management area, where about 40 per cent of the forest was burnt in the fires.

The group is concerned about half-a-dozen coupes that contain greater gliders - a possum species listed as “vulnerable” under national environment laws - are earmarked for harvest, with two scheduled to be logged in June.



Louise stands in a patch of forest in the Stony Creek coupe, which is scheduled for logging in June. *CREDIT: LISA ROBERTS*

“If the state government doesn't implement a moratorium, it gives loggers carte blanche to take down as much as they can in the next 18 months, because they know the end [of native logging] is in sight anyway,” Louise said.

The Victorian “major event review” will examine the environmental protections of its Regional Forest Agreements (RFA) and be conducted over around 12 months by an

independent panel, with members appointed by state and federal governments, a government spokesperson said.

VicForests will not harvest unburnt areas within the fire footprint in 2020, they said.

Regional forest agreements are made between state and federal governments. The state provides a plan to “balance” the impact of logging on flora and fauna with economic factors, and in return commercial logging operations are exempted from national laws that protect threatened species.



Sandy Greenwood, Gumbaynggirr Traditional Owner and spokesperson who has been leading a logging protest at Nambucca State Forest. *CREDIT: CALUMN HOCKEY.*

The Victorian panel will produce a report with non-binding recommendations that “may mean changes for how we use and manage our forests”, a government spokesperson said.

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During Victoria’s review, timber harvesting operations can continue in accordance with regulatory requirements. Logging continues in NSW, where no review has been commissioned after the fires.

“They’re going too hard on the logging after the fires,” says Matt Ball, speaking from his forest home at Brooman on the NSW south coast. His property adjoins a coupe which is being logged now. “We’ve got some untouched creek lines, along the valleys which the fires didn’t get to and they’ll be hacking into it.”





A greater glider in a tree at Stony Creek coupe. *CREDIT: LISA ROBERTS*

“All the animals have moved into the green patches, trying to eke out a living, but there’s a lot of competition from feral cats and foxes,” Mr Ball said.

In NSW, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has given approval to the NSW Forestry Corporation to log in 15 coupes across 3100 hectares in southern NSW, where at least 85 per cent of harvestable native hardwood forests was burnt in the fires.

The Forestry Corporation said it had “greatly reduced the intensity of timber harvesting” after the bushfires and was following new site-specific conditions developed by the EPA.





Above: Forest in the Stony Creek coupe area. *CREDIT: LISA ROBERTS*

Several community groups have come together to protest logging in the Nambucca State Forest, which was spared from the summer fires. There are 15 sites either being logged now or set for harvesting soon.

“If we don't act now our deeply significant cultural heritage will be desecrated, our beautiful old growth trees will be logged, rare flora will become extinct and our koalas and endangered species will literally have nowhere else to go,” said a Gumbaynggirr traditional owner and spokesperson, Sandy Greenwood.

NSW Forestry Corporation said it was carrying out a “low-intensity thinning operation” in regrowth forest that had previously been harvested that will “give trees more room to grow and retain forest cover across the entire area”.

Green senator Janet Rice said an assessment of the impact of the unprecedented fires should take place but logging should not continue while it does. “By the time this review has finally concluded and the recommendations are in, it may be too little too late,” Ms Rice said.

\*No surname used for privacy reasons.



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