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Injunction again stops VicForests logging

By [Miki Perkins](#)

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Victoria's government logging agency, VicForests, has again had a legal injunction halt its operations, after the Supreme Court heard allegations it had breached logging regulations in 14 coupes in the Central Highlands.

This new court action places further pressure on the agency, which is now facing five court challenges from crowdfunded community environmental groups.

Last month it lost a [landmark court case](#) when the Federal Court found it had unlawfully logged areas of critically endangered possum habitat.

At least 65 Victorian logging coupes are currently subject to legal challenges, the Supreme Court heard on Wednesday.

Barrister Jonathan Korman, acting for the volunteer group Kinglake Friends of the Forest, told the court VicForests intended to destroy the 20-metre-wide vegetation buffer in 10 logging coupes through the Central Highlands, in contravention of logging regulations.

“Operations have to be screened from view, and it’s an unfortunate fact that ... you’re passing through beautiful native forests and suddenly you have a moonscape on one side or the other,” Mr Korman told Justice Melinda Richards.

“The loss of the buffer is a serious loss of amenity to users of the forest ... and causes an eyesore for generations to come.”

Mr Korman alleged the state logging agency planned to cut down parts of the forest that were not in its timber-release plans, which describe areas to be logged.

Barrister Fiona Hudgson, acting for VicForests, said the state logging agency already had 65 coupes that were subject to injunctions.

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The agency was “severely constrained” and further injunctions could “become the straw that will break the camel’s back”, Ms Hudgson told the court.

She said VicForests would seek to draw a distinction between a road and tracks, saying the 20-metre vegetation buffer was not intended to apply to tracks through the forest that were only there to give access to a particular coupe.

Federal Court says VicForests unlawfully logged rare possum habitat

In April, logging was brought to a temporary halt in 26 unburnt areas of Victorian native forest after the volunteer group Wildlife of the Central Highlands argued in court that there was a risk of “serious and irreversible damage” to threatened species after last summer's bushfires.

And in early June, a temporary Supreme Court injunction was granted to stop logging at Big Pats Creek, near Warburton, with orders that a 20-metre border be left along a road and around a stand of rare trees.

On Wednesday, Justice Richards granted a temporary injunction, which means the agency may not fell or cut trees within the 20-metre buffer from the road within eight logging coupes before the next hearing on July 14.

Another six coupes were also granted an injunction until July 14, unless VicForests could produce an alternative map that would show the net area to be harvested would not exceed the timber release plan.

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