

Responses to Questions on Notice by Senator Rice

1. **How many times has the dispute resolution process been used under any Victorian regional forest agreement?**
 - a. **Please provide details of any instances where this has occurred, including the year, process and outcome.**

VicForests is not aware of any instance where the dispute resolution process has been triggered and/or used under any Victorian regional forest agreement. It must be noted, however, that Victorian RFAs are agreements between the Commonwealth and the State of Victoria. Accordingly, VicForests' answer is based on its own knowledge. Further information on this issue may be known by the parties to the RFA.

2. **In evidence at the hearing the VicForests CEO stated that VicForests was required to operate on an 80 year time horizon. Where is this requirement set out and how is it implemented in practice? What legislation, guidelines or documents capture this timeframe?**

The calculation of harvest area limits in the Allocation Order uses a nominal 80 year rotation for ash species, while for mixed species it is longer.

The Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014 does not explicitly stipulate a rotation age/period. It does however indicate that rotation periods are to be used to maintain a diversity of forest structures throughout the landscape (s.2.2.2.9)

The rotation age is an indication of the age where forests stands begin to plateau in their growth and will vary according to parameters such as species and site quality. Therefore in long term modelling of resource sustainability, a range of rotation ages is used. Ultimately the suitability of a stand for harvesting is determined by its physical attributes.

The majority of ash harvesting in Victoria continues to be stands originating from the Black Friday fires of 1939. These fires created large swathes of ash forest of a single age. Harvesting of these stands since the 1980's has, as the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014 seeks, provided a diversity of age classes and forest structures through the landscape. The other mechanism by which this can be achieved is fire, however it is not controlled like harvesting and can clearly result in unintended consequences.

3. **What processes have VicForests or the Victorian Government undertaken to examine the reserve system to determine whether it is comprehensive, adequate and representative; or in relation to increasing wood supply?**

The CAR reserve system was reviewed as part of the modernisation to the Regional Forests Agreements which were finalised in early 2020. These agreements were entered into by the Commonwealth and the States. For further information you may wish to contact the relevant Commonwealth or Victorian department.

VicForests' planning and operational processes are based on supporting the public land conservation reserve system and implementing management regimes in State forest that ensure high conservation values are appropriately identified, protected and managed.

VicForests' approach to forest management incorporates an increased focus on a more adaptive approach to selecting and applying harvesting and regeneration systems that retain and protect a broad range of forest values, including High Conservation Values (HCVs), thereby informally reserving additional areas within coupes.