

Attachment 1 Native Vegetation in the Hancock Estate

Conversion of Strzelecki Forests to Plantation Mono cultures

There have been many arguments over decades refuting government and industry claims that the Strzeleckis were all cleared and represented nothing but useless scrub which should be converted to plantations.

The Strzeleckis are unique forests which are a mosaic of old growth including rainforest, reforestation/ plantings, plantations and regenerating forests. The public forests of the Strzeleckis have been excluded from public land planning processes which set aside comprehensive and adequate reserves. The Strzeleckis have the least amount of land set aside in any forested region of Victoria. The minimum for public land is 15% of the original vegetation extant the Strzeleckis has only 2% protected in Parks and Reserves.

Hancock Victorian Plantations bought out the Victorian Plantation Estate in 1998 and the Australian Paper estate in 2001 which is a mix of freehold land and crown leaseholds. All of the land is deemed to be treated as private land. None of the planning provisions for the protection of native vegetation applies to the HVP estate apart from their freehold land. Refer to **Red Dot Decision Summary VCAT NO. P160/2006. Friends of Gippsland Bush Inc. v Latrobe City Council March 2006 Citation (2006) VCAT 465.**

ORDER I declare that the licence held by Grand Ridge Plantations Pty. Ltd. comes within the exemption for planted timber or harvesting of "timber harvesting carried out under licence from the Secretary to the Department of Sustainability and Environment" set out in the table to clause 52.17-06 and accordingly there is no need to obtain a permit pursuant to clause 52.17 to harvest timber in Jacksons 1 coupe on the subject land.

Biosis Research Pty. Ltd. April 2005 Report to Latrobe City (extract)

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The simplest assessment of this issue has been adopted by GRP, DSE and the FSC, in that all areas designated as plantation on GRP's plans as sold or leased to them by the State of Victoria as plantation are considered plantation regardless of what vegetation is present. This legalistic acceptance of areas as plantations has little or no ecological foundation and appears inconsistent with other formal definitions of plantations and native vegetation.

Conclusion

The habitat score of vegetation likely to be cleared in association with the proposed road between Jackson's 1 and Gunyah Shortcut has been underestimated by GRP. This vegetation has high conservation significance and the framework indicates that clearing of such vegetation is "generally not permitted."

The forest of Jackson's 1 does not clearly satisfy the definition of plantation provided by the Code but does clearly satisfy the definition of native vegetation provided by the Framework and its associated guidelines.

The vegetation of this coupe is therefore best described as indigenous Wet Forest.

Documents received during VCAT Case above **Hancock Victorian Plantations Forest Stewardship Health and Safety Management Systems Native Vegetation Management Policy 2006**

5.2.2- 5.2.5 Native vegetation within plantations management options.

“Land Conservation Council -Review of Victorian Plantations Corporation Vested Lands As requested by the Minister for Planning, August 1993” Extract.

The Minister for Planning commissioned the review after a request from the Minister for Natural Resources arising from issues raised in Parliament during the passage of the VPC Bill.

The review argues that while throughout Victoria, the lands vested in the VPC, generally followed softwood plantation boundaries, there were some notable exceptions, especially in Gippsland, where vested lands included, ‘extensive areas of mountain ash reforestation in the Strzelecki Ranges.’ *The review continued, ‘These areas were recommended for hardwood timber production by Council, which noted that the objective of the hardwood planting was to restore the forest so that it will eventually have a similar structure to the original forest. A range of uses was to be provided and no differentiation was made between reforested areas and areas retaining the original forest cover. This is a major change of use and it is unclear whether major changes in silvicultural practise and the provision for non-timber uses is envisaged.’*

The Review states its concerns about the loss of State Forest status for native forest vested with the VPC. State Forest managed under the Forests Act, provides for a range of uses including nature conservation, water production, catchment protection, education and preservation of scenic values. The Review stated that, *‘This concern is further emphasised in that the Victorian Plantations Corporation Act 1993 does not prescribe requirements for the protection and management of non-plantation values, nor empower the Corporation to undertake such tasks.’*

The Strzeleckis stood out as the area of most concern in this regard. *‘The most notable and extensive areas of included native forest are those vested lands in the Strzelecki Ranges whose government approved LCC land use recommendation is ‘hardwood production area’ or uncommitted land. These areas are in addition to reforested lands.’*

(red highlights my emphasis)