

Independent Review of Timber Harvesting Regulation

Key findings and response

About the review

In September 2018, the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) at the request of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change commissioned an *Independent Review of Timber Harvesting Regulation*.

The Review considered:

- a) the adequacy of DELWP's prosecutions policies, procedures and processes;
- b) DELWP's current capability and capacity to effectively regulate timber harvesting on public land in Victoria; and
- c) an initial assessment of whether further regulatory or legislative reform is required to ensure modern, best practice regulation of timber harvesting in Victoria.

The independent Review panel of regulatory experts consisted of Nial Finegan (chair), Jane Brockington and Peter Rozen.

Key findings

The review was established to investigate the adequacy of timber harvesting regulation however, the findings and recommendations went far beyond that to encompass all aspects of regulation undertaken by DELWP.

The Review found that while DELWP has dedicated and professional staff and has made significant improvements to its regulatory approach, it has more to do to improve timeliness, responsiveness and transparency. The panel's report identified opportunities for DELWP to improve its legislative framework, processes and tools to become a modern and more effective environmental regulator. It found DELWP would benefit from having a single, identifiable regulator to drive regulatory practice and go beyond compliance.

The panel made 14 recommendations for improved focused on:

Doctrine: improved regulatory strategy, policies and guidelines

Engagement: a strategic and planned approach to working with communities and stakeholders, building confidence in DELWP as a regulator

Governance: improved oversight of DELWP's regulator activities and outcomes

Capability: a planned approach to developing staff capability, supported by improved system and processes

Tools: improved legislative instruments providing greater clarity, certainty, and regulatory powers



Response

DELWP accepted all 14 recommendations of the Review. We are committed to delivering a regulatory approach that is coherent, consistent and complete.

As a first step to achieving this, we have established the Office of the Conservation Regulator (OCR). Led by the Chief Conservation Regulator (CCR), the OCR will provide oversight for DELWP's regulatory functions.

This includes a range of conservation and environmental matters including timber harvesting, biodiversity protection, fire prevention and land management.

The early focus of the OCR is implementing reforms to:

- provide greater certainty on what the law is and how we will apply it by publishing Statements of Regulatory Intent for key areas of regulation;
- increase transparency about regulatory activity by publishing information on regulatory decisions and reporting on our performance;
- ensure consistency and strengthen our approach to regulation by building internal frameworks, policies and systems to support our work;
- listen to and respond to stakeholder priorities through greater consultation and clearer information to support engagement.

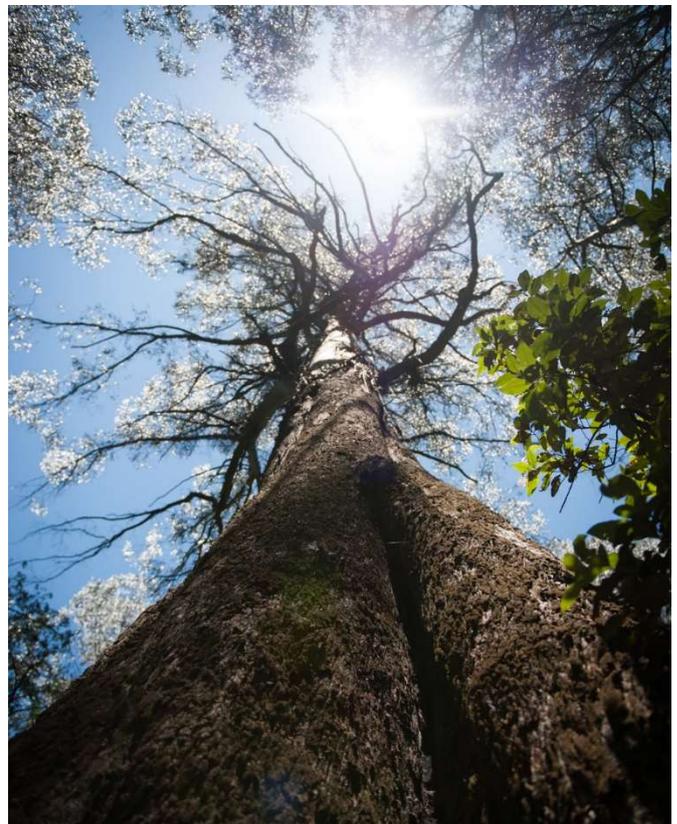
Work has already started to implement the recommendations of the independent review. This has included the publication of a draft Statement of Regulatory Intent for Timber Harvesting which articulates our approach to Timber Harvesting regulation.

This Statement is open for consultation on the Engage Victoria website until 17 May 2019.

Over the coming months the OCR will:

- Publish a draft regulatory framework – to clearly set out what the OCR regulates, how we determine our regulatory priorities and use our regulatory tools

- Publish a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which will describe how the OCR will apply the law
- Publish state-wide and regional compliance plans to identify regulatory priorities
- Publish a Community Engagement Strategy for how the OCR will work with communities, stakeholders and those we regulate
- Consult on further Statements of Regulatory Intent developed for key areas of responsibility



More information

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