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## **VicForests' 2013- 14 Sustainability Report demonstrates positive results**

VicForests has protected almost 10 000 hectares of habitat for threatened species and areas surrounding old growth forest over the last four years.

Figures released this week in VicForests' 2013-14 Sustainability Report, show 7000 hectares were excluded from harvesting last financial year to protect old growth forest, and habitat for species such as the Leadbeater's Possum and the Long-footed Potoroo.

VicForests' Chief Executive Officer, Robert Green, said, "In recent years VicForests has moved from being primarily focussed on timber production and regeneration to including an additional focus on the management of forest-dwelling biodiversity and the impacts of our operations on the environment in which we work.

"These 7000 hectares which were once available for timber production have now been placed in reserve for conservation by VicForests."

The Sustainability Report, published this week, was created in compliance with the Global Reporting Initiative.

Part of the process is to consult with stakeholders on the highest priority issues and this year's report focusses on VicForests' work in biodiversity management, safety and sustainability.

Mr Green said, "I am pleased to report that during 2013-14 VicForests made significant progress on our three key goals that were outlined in last year's Statement of Corporate Intent; delivering improved profitability, helping secure the long-term future of the native hardwood timber industry and improving the ecological management of Victoria's native forests.

Mr Green said research was a key focus for VicForests in 2013-14, "Our research programs primarily focus on practical research that assists the development of decision support tools that can contribute to the ongoing improvement of the forest practices we adopt.

"Where possible, we intend to involve VicForests' staff in research programs to ensure that our 'in-house' skills and knowledge continue to develop. Projects will be considered in four key areas; Process Development, targeted research, monitoring and scientific engagement.

"VicForests recognises that research is an integral component for developing successful conservation outcomes, meeting societal demands and ensuring harvesting practices align with sustainable forest management principles.

"We acknowledge our responsibility to add to the existing knowledge pool, either through contribution to research programs run by other organisations, or through undertaking our own programs," he said.

VicForests regularly publicises its commitment to regrowing areas after harvesting and Mr Green said that the organisation successfully regenerated 2242 hectares of previously harvested areas in 2013-14.

VicForests was also part of the Leadbeater's Possum Advisory Group with the Government adopting all of the group's 13 recommendations which have been developed to help secure the future of the Possum.

Mr Green said, "VicForests is either wholly or partly responsible for implementing ten of the 13 recommendations which have been developed including a shift from clear fell harvesting with the adoption of a regrowth retention harvesting system in at least 50 per cent of our ash harvesting areas.

"This is one of the biggest changes to forest management practices in Victoria in recent years.

"VicForests will use this new harvesting system in at least 50 per cent of the area harvested of ash within the range of the Leadbeater's Possum to assist in the possum's recovery and persistence, by providing increased connectivity of habitat, and the recolonisation of areas following harvesting," he said.

Financially VicForests also did well in the 2013-14 year, recording a profit of \$3.4 and continuing to strengthen its balance sheet through a reduction in amount outstanding to the Treasury Corporation of Victoria by \$5.3 million, but Mr Green said it isn't all about the money for this business.

"VicForests' achievements are not only measured in dollars, but also by our stewardship of the environment. We are committed to adopting forest management practices that demonstrate the highest levels of environmental care," he said.