

The Victorian Association of Forest Industries agrees with Murray Barson (*Mind the habitat*, 25/1); our public forests should be managed on a scientific basis.

However, Peter Walsh is correct: Victorian forestry is conducted on a sustainable scale. About 5,000 hectares of native forest was harvested last year: 0.07 percent of the 7.8 million hectares of public native forest in Victoria.

Areas are also reserved to protect endangered or threatened species, which are not harvested.

Despite its minimal scope and impact, the industry employs over 24,000 people and indirectly support up to 52,000 indirect jobs.

The greatest threat to our forests is fire, not forestry. Mr Barson may be interested to know the three landscape scale fires of the past decade — the 2002-03, 2006-07 and 2009 fires — burnt approximately 3 million hectares of land. Much of this was native forest. It would take VicForests over 500 years to harvest an area this size.

Forestry is not the problem, but instead part of the solution to managing fire risk. Forestry workers — particularly those in the native forest sector — are based on-location and are skilled and experienced in fire management (thinning, maintaining fire breaks and roads to ease access to fires) and suppression; and most forestry equipment is useful in fire-fighting .

Through these roles, forestry helps protect our native forests' carbon stores and biodiversity.

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