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## **MEDIA RELEASE: VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT LOGS LAST SIGNIFICANT STANDS OF OLD-GROWTH FORESTS**

The Brumby government continues to stall on delivering a stated election commitment to protect old-growth forests as bulldozers and chainsaws move in to the irreplaceable "Valley of the Giants" forest in East Gippsland, conservation groups said today.

Matt Ruchel, Executive Director of the Victorian National Parks Association said the ALP committed in 2006 to protect the last remaining stands of old-growth forests in East Gippsland, but that commitment had remained unfulfilled as areas such as this were now being logged.

"Premier Brumby must move logging contractors and machinery out of this area immediately and ban any further logging in these areas until new National Park boundaries are delivered. These forests have been identified by scientists and community alike as being of immense environmental significance," he said.

"Some of the best examples of old-growth forest are on Brown Mountain, found to the west of the Errinundra National Park, and conservation groups have been working with the government since 2006 in identifying this area for protection."

Lindsay Hesketh, Australian Conservation Foundation spokesperson, said since 2006 VicForests had logged hundreds of hectares of precious old-growth forests, contrary to the government's commitment.

"Long-standing negotiations with the government to deliver the 2006 old-growth promise are severely compromised by this logging," he said.

Jill Redwood, Co-ordinator of Environment East Gippsland said the forests consisted of hundreds of massive trees that had been mapped, named and measured for a walking track, presenting a prime tourism opportunity for East Gippsland's economy.

"Most Victorians would be horrified to know these unique and endangered areas are being clear felled for Japanese woodchips with a very small allocation going to local sawmills," she said.

Luke Chamberlain, Forest Campaigner for The Wilderness Society said recently released science from the Australian National University showed Australia's eucalypt forests store far more carbon than was previously thought.

"The logging of these forests on Brown Mountain will make a major contribution to Australia's green house gas emissions," he said.

"Forests must be at the forefront of the Brumby and Rudd governments' climate change agenda. Protecting Australia's native forests will help make the deep emissions cuts necessary to halt climate change."

Brown Mountain has been actively fought for since 1989 when 300 people were arrested trying to save these National Estate listed forests from being destroyed.

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