

Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations

Kinglake Friends of the Forest

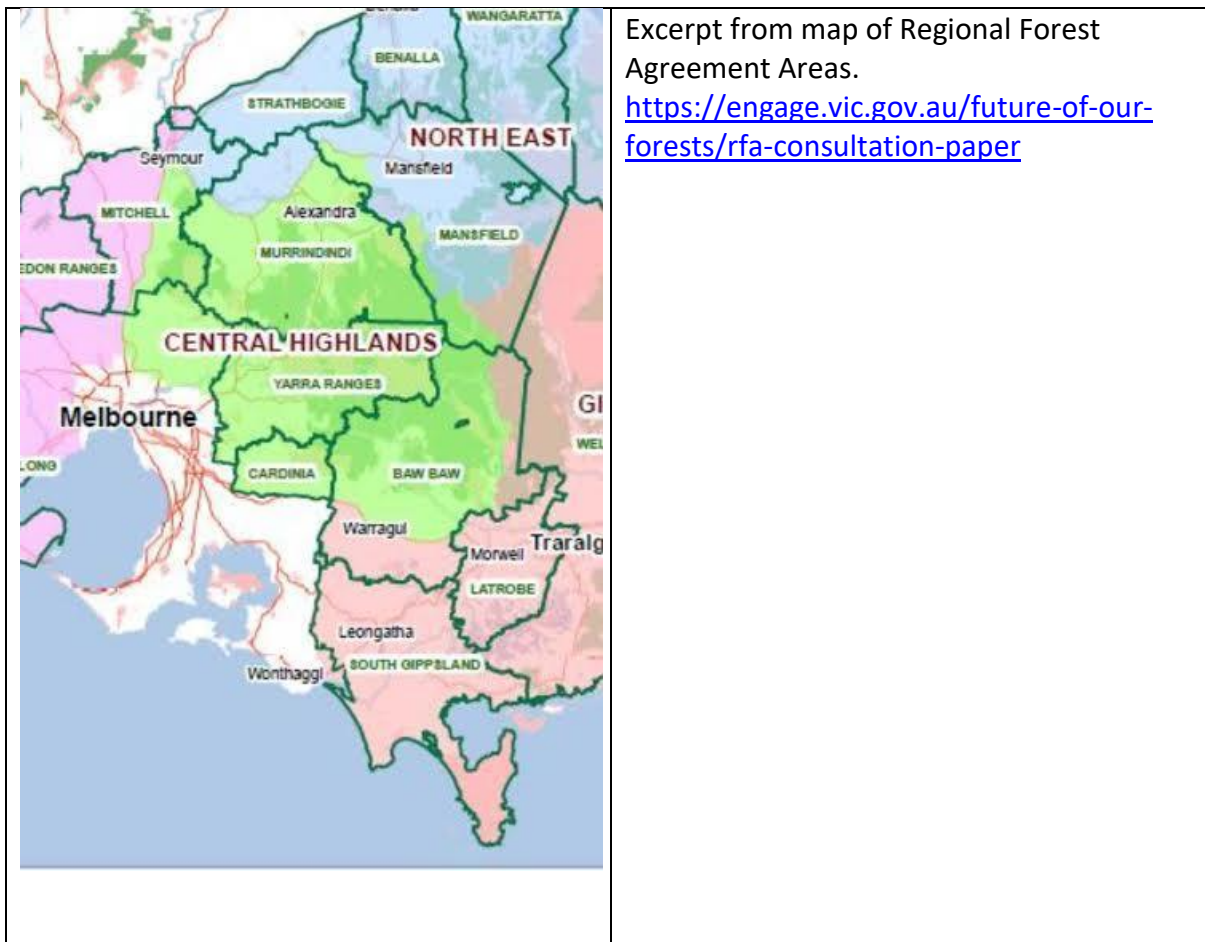
Submission

- 1) Overview: Logging and the Central Highlands
- 2) Tours for Greater Gliders: Kinglake and Narbethong
- 3) Trailbike and FWD tracks: Toolangi
- 4) Trailbike and FWD tracks: Mt Disappointment
- 5) Tourist Attractions: Giant Trees and Waterfalls
- 6) Summary



1) Overview: Logging and the Central Highlands

The Central Highlands of Victoria is located close to Melbourne. It includes the Shires of Murrindindi, Yarra Ranges and Cardinia, as well as sections of Mitchell Shire and Baw Baw. It is very close to Melbourne, with its population of 5 million, with all locations listed in this submission an easy day trip.

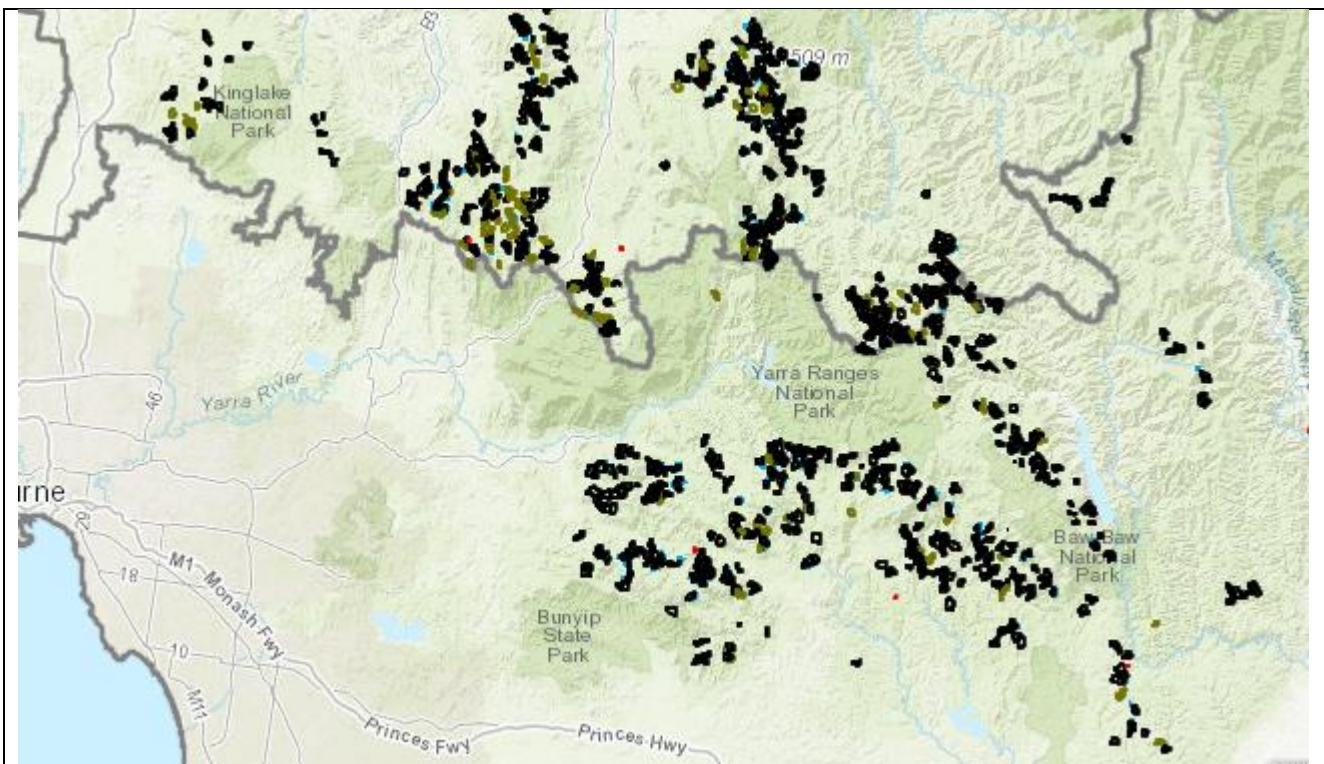


The Central Highlands is unique in the world for its Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) forests. Other unique plant species of the area include Southern Beech (*Dicksonia antarctica*) and Tree Geebung (*Persoonia arborea*).

Threatened animal species which live here include two threatened species: Greater Gliders (*Petauroides volans*) and Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*).

Only some of this area is permanently protected in National Parks, primarily Kinglake National Park, Mt Baw Baw National Park and Yarra Ranges National Park. The rest is state forest, much of which is available to logging by the Victorian government agency VicForests.

The geographic concept of the Central Highlands is itself a creation of the Regional Forest Agreements, signed by the Federal and State Governments in 1998. Below is a map of areas which are proposed to be logged within the Central Highlands within the next 4-5 years.



VicForests July 2020 Timber Release Plan (black: current and future coupes. green: current regenerating). Historic logging not shown.

<https://www.vicforests.com.au/planning-1/timber-release-plan-1/timber-release-plan-process>

Logging impacts environmental infrastructure in two ways.

The first impact is quite specific to the site itself. Spotlighting for Greater Gliders can only occur in intact forest, whilst bush tracks clearly lose value if the area around it is denuded of

bush. Also, a visit to a giant tree or waterfall is affected if the tourist must drive past cleared logged areas or short tree crops that follow logging to reach the site.

The second impact is more broad but equally as real. Forests have a myriad of ecological functions. They store carbon, purify air and water, and provide habitat for threatened species found nowhere on earth. Amidst a time of climate change, cutting down forests for low value products like paper and pallets is the worst thing we, as a society, could be doing.



As climate change worsens, these forests will become ever more important. Not only for the ecological services they provide (particularly as carbon sinks), nor just as refuge for species threatened by climate change, but as a source of solace for humans.

This submission will briefly highlight some of the opportunities available to the state and local governments to provide outdoor recreation to meet the needs of a growing population. Each section will also reference the threat caused by continued industrial logging of these areas.

2) Tours for Greater Gliders: Kinglake and Narbethong

Kinglake Friends of the Forest have run several free tours to spot Greater Gliders at night. These have been very popular with members of the public. They have been carefully organised, with care taken to shield the Gliders’ eyes from any damage.

These have taken place at Eagle Glen Track in Kinglake –around which the forest has been branded a “coupe” called “Wallaces” and is planned to be cut down. If it goes ahead, forest both sides of the track will be lost, and with it the opportunity to see these animals in a close location to Melbourne, with the sealed road all the way to the Track providing ease of access.

	
<p>Eagle Glen Track, Kinglake (shown by arrow)</p>	<p>Proposed logging coupe, 'Wallaces', overlaid on track.</p>

Another accessible area where Greater Gliders are known to occur, and tours could conceivably occur, includes Fisher Creek Rd, Narbethong. Whilst many endangered Greater Gliders have been sighted here, this area has also been subject to heavy logging.

<p>Fishers Creek Rd, Narbethong (shown by arrow).</p>	<p>Coupes proposed for the area around Fisher's Creek Rd.</p>



3) Trailbike and FWD tracks: Toolangi

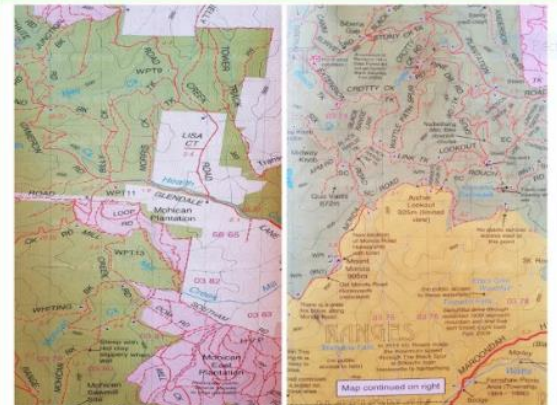
Forest tracks are popular for both 4WD enthusiasts and trail bikers. The screenshots below all show how many locations in Toolangi and the Black Ranges are particularly favoured.

a: Cycling in Toolangi

<p>Visiting : Healesville, Black Range, Molesworth, Mt St Leonard Distance : 167km When : Saturday 8th April 2017, 5:00am @ Healesville</p> <p>Another ride with a simple concept: Ride the full length of Black Range, from Healesville all the way to Molesworth. This was a good solid day through some of my favourite country and a ride that I'd recommend to others.</p>	<p>I had the idea for this ride after seeing the full length of Black Range from a distance on a previous adventure. Here's what it looked like :</p>
<p>The Black Range cycling route, as outlined in a blog from 2017: http://therewillbedirt.com/2017/04/08/black-range-traverse/</p>	<p>One photograph, taken by the cyclist and posted on his blog, shows a past logging coupe.</p>


b: 4WD in Toolangi

4x4 Parts & Service Specialists  



Toolangi - Black Ranges Forest Activities Map

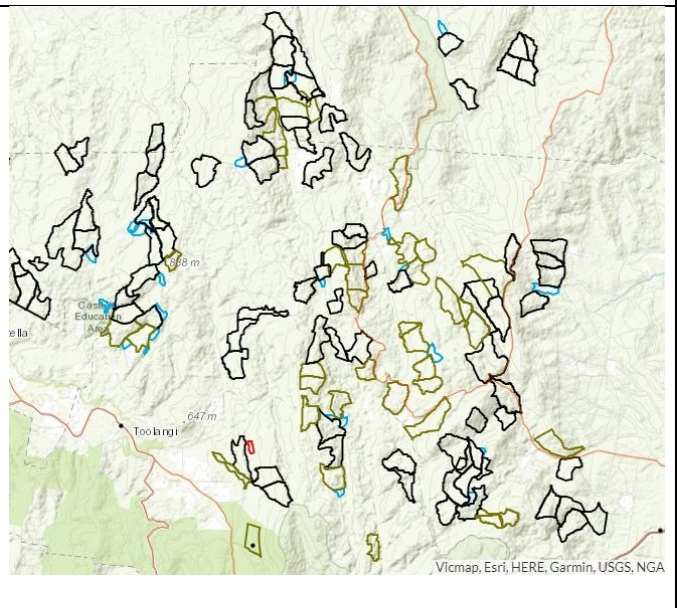
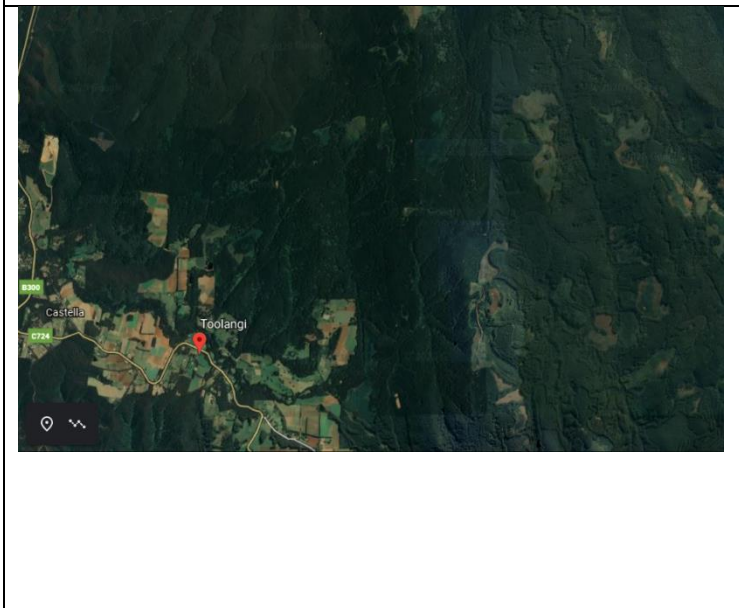
Lost in Toolangi – Aug 2014
Published August 22, 2014 by Club 4x4



It was Sunday the 31st August Misha, Ross and myself met up at Flying Tarts in Kinglake. After some tasty breakfast we headed over to Toolangi. We arrived at the base of Rocky track where we aired down and disconnected.

Map of 4WD opportunities

<http://club4x4.org.au/lost-in-toolangi-aug-2014/>

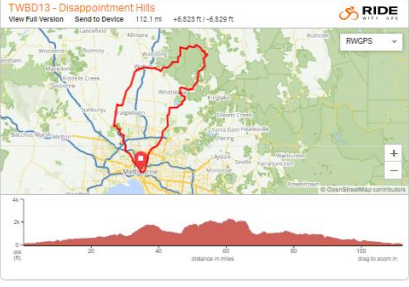



Toolangi area.

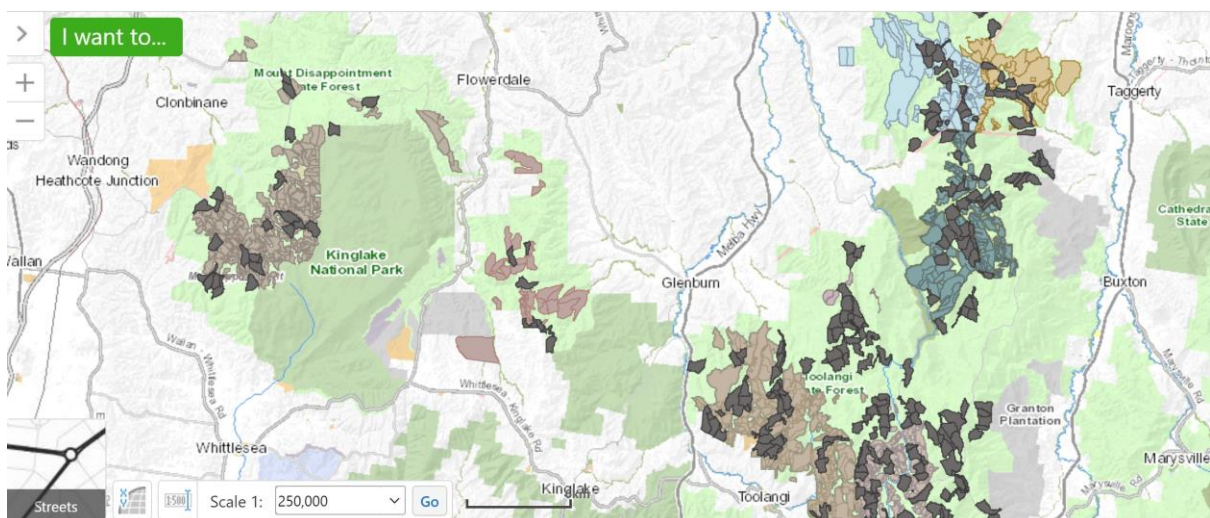
Map of proposed logging coupes (black) in Toolangi area. Green areas are regenerating.
<https://www.vicforests.com.au/planning-1/timber-release-plan-1/timber-release-plan-process>

4) Trailbike and FWD tracks: Mt Disappointment

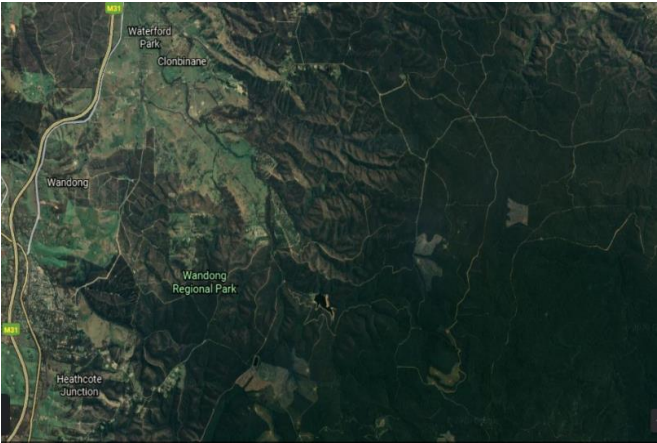
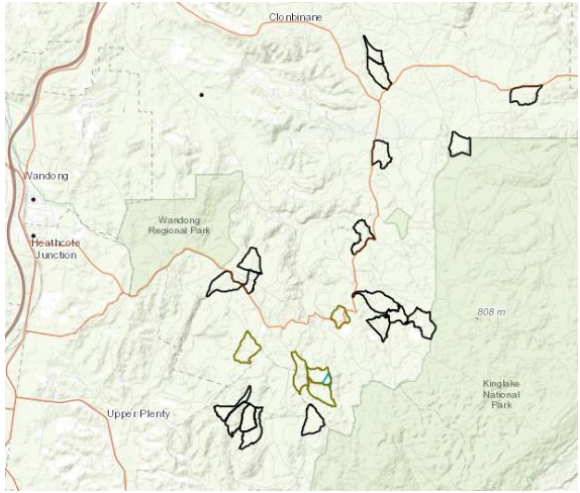
Mt Disappointment remains popular with both trail bikers and 4WD enthusiasts, as the screenshots below suggest.

<p>Visiting : Humevale, Hazeldene, Mt Disappointment State Forest Distance : ~175km When : Sunday 8th August 2010, 7am @ Fed Square</p> <p>Heading north again this time. Humevale Rd to start the day and then it's down the other side to Hazeldene before cutting across Mt Disappointment State Forest to Wallan. Some good climbs in this section – might even check out Strath Creek Falls if the legs are up to it. After Wallan, Old Sydney Rd will take us homeways in the best way – on rollers made of dirt.</p> <p>I'll be running a freewheel for this one – time to enjoy some descents!</p> 	<p>Sandhurst 4WD Club Bendigo</p> <p>NEWS CALENDAR MEMBERS</p> <p>Download 720p</p> <p>Mt Disappointment State Forest - Andrew negotiating tricky sec...</p>  <p>So we turned around and headed back up Stoney Creek and had lunch at a picnic area on Main Mountain Rd. Heading of again South along Main Mountain Rd we turned right down Boundry Rd which was a fairly easy track, getting us to Anderson Garden Camping Area, we then got onto Raynors Rd</p>
<p>A trailbike route highlighted on a 2010 blog at Mt Disappointment. http://therewillbedirt.com/2010/08/08/disappointment-hills-2/</p>	<p>Mt Disappointment, north of Melbourne, is also popular with FWD enthusiasts. https://sandhurst4wdclub.org.au/mt-disappointment-trip-report/#page-content</p>

Mt Disappointment has been logged for many decades, and as a result its natural values have been severely compromised. The map below shows the full extent of historic logging. Dark grey: forest stands in the current TRP. Other colours: forest logged over the last 60 years.



Below is a satellite map of Mt Disappointment as it is now, with a map of future coupes aligned with it.

	
Google Earth view of Mt Disappointment.	Coupes proposed for the area around Mt Disappointment.

5) Tourist Attractions: Giant Trees and Waterfalls

a: Giant Trees

There are several notable tourist attractions in the Central Highlands which are compromised by logging activity. One such example is the Kalatha Giant, a 65 metre tall Mountain Ash located at Toolangi. After the 2009 fires, a tree walk was constructed by the local community. It rates a mention on the tourist visitor website <https://visityarravalley.com.au>, which notes how, having escaped both fires and past logging, the immediate area around the tree 'is now protected and is a popular tourist attraction'.

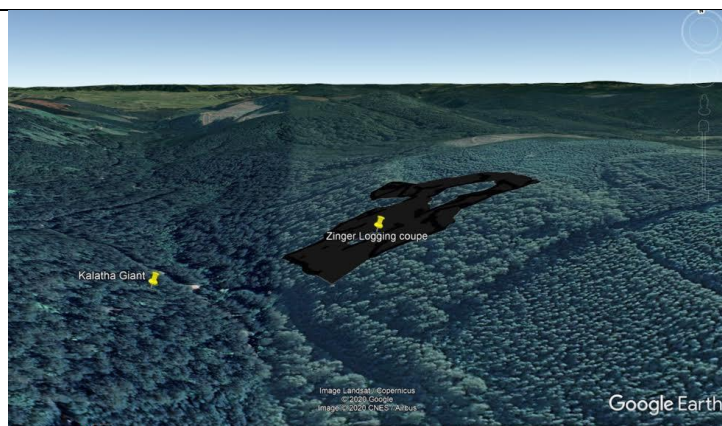
In 2020, and within sight of the tree, VicForests attempted to log a wet forest stand which they labelled 'Zinger'. It was only sustained community protest, which involved members of the community setting up camp on the site, which led VicForests to give up after only a few days of logging.



Chris Taylor © 2017

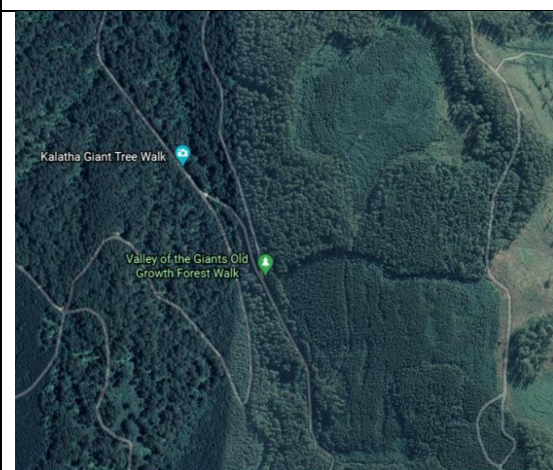
Kalatha Giant Tree

<https://www.greatforestnationalpark.com.au/kalatha-tree.html>

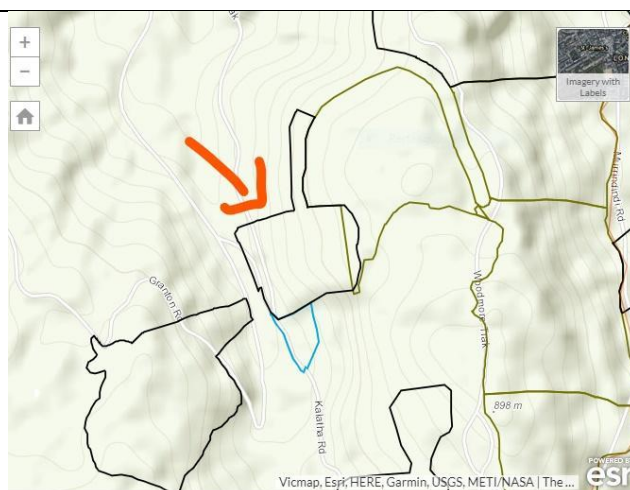


Google Earth

Location of the Kalatha Giant, in relation to the proposed coupe 'Zinger'.



Google Earth image, showing location of Giant Tree (blue)



The 'Zinger' coupe (marked by red arrow) is still on the TRP. As is another only meters away.

Another notable tree is the Ada Tree. On the website <https://www.visitwarburton.com.au>, it is called 'one of Victoria's largest living trees', and estimated at over 300 years old.

THE ADA TREE WALK



The Ada Tree, a giant Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*), is considered to be one of Victoria's largest living trees. It is estimated to be over 300 years old and towers over the surrounding rainforest in the headwaters of the Little Ada River.


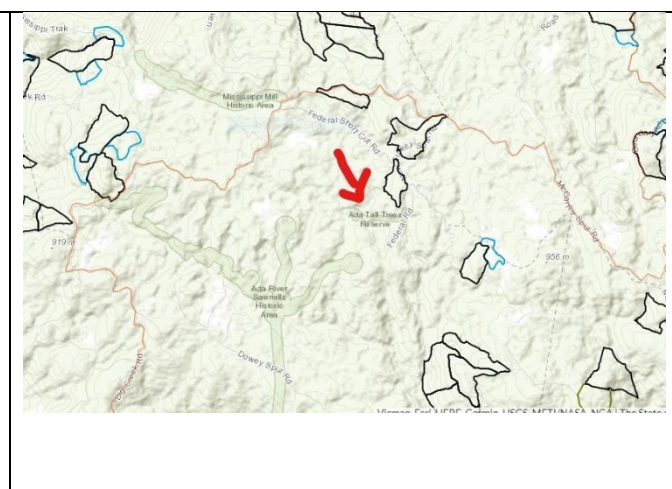
Extract from tourist website

<https://www.visitwarburton.com.au/activity/the-ada-tree-walk>



Base of the Ada Tree

<https://experiencevictoria.wordpress.com/2014/06/30/the-ada-tree-yarra-state-forest/>

	
<p>Google Earth view of area around Ada Tree. Old coupes are evident in this picture.</p>	<p>Proposed coupes in area around the Ada Tree (red arrow) Historic logging not shown on map</p>

It has been noted by visitors how logging in the area affects the experience of this tree. This is by Sophie Cunningham from the Sydney Morning Herald of March 2019.

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/ashes-to-ashes-a-love-song-to-queen-ada-and-other-threatened-oldgrowth-trees-20190325-h1crxb.html>

'It was in the spirit of both friendship and activism that I went to visit the largest tree in Victoria. Her name is Ada and she's a mountain ash (Eucalyptus regnans), one of the tallest flowering plants on earth. She is a queen, an empress – a goddess – of trees. To find her I drove through patches of clearfelled forest, past the shattered, dismembered corpses of trees lying in the mud. You can see these areas from a distance, patches of harsh light that contrast with the filtered light of their forest surrounds'.

b: Waterfalls

The Central Highlands are blessed with waterfalls, but the experience of seeing them is potentially compromised by nearby logging operations. Here, for instance, is La La Falls near Warburton.



La La Falls, near Warburton

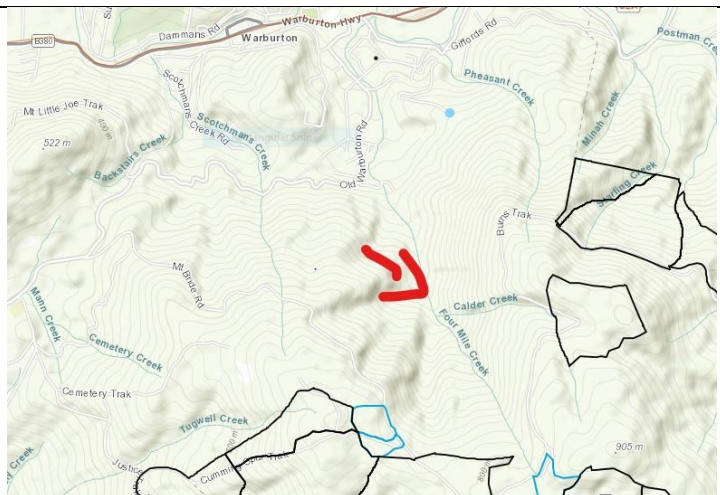
<https://www.visitwarburton.com.au/places-to-go/top-trails/la-la-falls-walk>

La La Falls, near Warburton

https://warburtonholidaypark.com.au/things_to_do/la-la-falls/?id=picnic-spots



Google Earth view of area around La La Falls



VicForests map of proposed logging coupes in the area of La La Falls. Red arrow shows approximate location of Falls. Historic logging not shown on map

4) Summary

All the opportunities for sightseeing and recreation listed here - spotlighting tours, 4WD and trailbiking tracks, giant trees and waterfalls – are available close to Melbourne.

A July 2020 article in the Mountain Monthly (below) noted how, following the first Covid lockdown, the Kinglake area was experiencing parking issues as Melbourne residents flocked to the area.

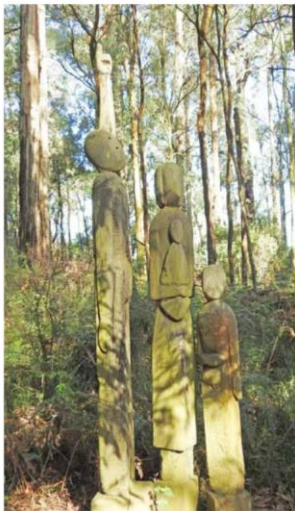
This hints at what the future holds. Such outdoor experiences will only grow in attraction over time, and with it the need to provide tourist facilities, such as parking, toilets, well maintained trails and signage.

However, every one of the above attractions is being compromised by ongoing logging in the Central Highlands. There are two types of impact. One is an immediate impact, with denuded forest either removing the chance for an attraction (spotlighting) or affecting its overall quality (bush tracks and visitor sites) for the next 80 years or so.

The other impact is longer term but more apparent by the year. It is the contribution logging makes to climate change, by adding more carbon to the atmosphere. It is the loss of habitat for threatened species. The loss of ecosystem services, such as water and air filtration. The loss of a place of solace for humans.

Amidst a time of climate change, the value of our intact native forests to provide environmental infrastructure has never been higher.

Managing the influx in 'our backyard'



By Jane O'Connor

Where are all these people coming from?

It is winter, cold, changeable and the locals are stoking up the fire.

You can't get a parking spot in the Kinglake township at weekends, let alone at any of the obvious, highly attractive national and state park areas generally, and don't mention 'waterfall' or there will be a queue.

Add to the mix the marketing message that we are 'just an hour from Melbourne' and the covid-lockdown population is keen to breathe our fresher air.

The fact that more than 40% of our shire is made up of state and crown land has come into sharp focus almost overnight.

The cyclists, motorcyclists and 'Sunday drivers' are obvious, but there is another major influx and they are taking to the bush – many for the first time.

Seasoned bushwalkers – both locals and visitors – know, respect and equip themselves for the incredible variety of challenging terrain our extensive state and national parks have to offer.

However, in some locations bush walking tracks have had to be closed due to the sheer volume of traffic and the non-adherence to social distancing rules. Picnic areas are crowded in spite of the low temperatures.

As a keen bushwalker and local resident of many years standing, I have long enjoyed 'our own backyard', but been equally surprised by the amount of incoming traffic.

It carries with it all of the predictable outcomes of any 'rush' into an area – people unfamiliar with the terrain and conditions; ill-equipped to handle more challenging locations; miscalculating time factors and weather.

As the state moves to encourage as possible to help revive the industry, and business in general, this emerging situation is also stretching our parks and other staff to the limit.

From the state forest trails of Toolang to national park access throughout Kinglake and Kinglake West, reports of up to 300 cars and more a day on fine and long weekends in one car park alone have



been reported at obvious destination points. Other beauty spots that aren't used to and don't cater for large numbers are seeing a regular 'traffic jam' and some heated exchanges in 'the queue'.

The upside is that Bed and breakfasts and other accommodation in some areas are reporting that they are again getting regular bookings and do arm their guests with the right information before they head out.

My walking companion and I have driven day trippers back to their cars when they've completely lost track of where they are and taken the time to talk to others who are equally confused.

A major shock for some is when their phone reception dies (common in large parts of our territory) and reliance on the map app dies along with it.

We don't pretend to have done the in-depth market research on where the traffic is hailing from, but anecdotal information points to some common factors.

A key decider appears to be that if it's a 'day trip', they get out into the environment and soak in some nature and views, can safely get back home in time for dinner, then it's on the list.

They are either coming via Healesville and the Yarra Valley into Toolang and going no further than that; or up the Kinglake-Heideberg Road;

and through Whittlesea to the accessible national park areas to the west.

"Imagine having this as your backyard, how lucky are you?" said two women as we drove them back through the Toolang State Forest to their carpark, off a cold Mount St Leonards road with the mist already descending.

They had finally planned a day out of lockdown in Port Melbourne and Carlton and started in the beautiful and gentle Wirrawilla Walk, which they'd found on a website.

Leaving the safe boardwalk and heading onto more challenging loop tracks – such as the Tanglefoot or Myrtle Gully – and up for an 8 to 10km round trip sounded great.

What they may have considered a good, brisk walk in their home environment, had a vastly different – steeper, colder and wetter – reality in ours, even on well formed tracks.

But, they were super keen to learn more and to come back. On the same trip, a young couple had taken the same side trail. The young man with a toddler in a carry sling and high heeled dress boots on and was about to take a different, more treacherous track that even we 'veterans' treat with great respect.

In writing this article, I make no judgements on the rights and wrongs of the situation, or have the answers as to how we should be handling it, but



rather as a potential catalyst for the community to think about how we can embrace, engage and educate our influx of visitors and new residents.

The expert park authorities – Parks Victoria, DELWP and Melbourne Water – offer detailed information for visitors to check before they leave home. So too does the Shire of Murrindindi when it comes to which of its attractions are open.

The signage on these destinations is also clear as to what you can and can't do in the area, distances and terrain involved, where there may be picnic spots or toilets and what to see.

Let's back them up and help where we can.

We and they are aware that visitors are climbing through locked gates in closed areas; at times accessing closed privately owned plantations;

letting the dog run free off leash in Lyrebird breeding habitat; not always practicing safe distancing and; many other 'don't do's'.

As a starting point, we can recognise the fact that these are publicly owned areas and become our own best ambassadors who offer some sensible guidance and local knowledge when asked – including where to go for a coffee and lunch, to buy something for dinner on the way home, or where other interesting things may be on offer.

Mountain Monthly will continue to bring our readers some useful information on where to begin safely exploring our beautiful 'backyard' and to share with our visitors.

The map in each edition of MM is also a useful guide to help people with directions.

Making a difference in our community.

Kinglake branch
Shop 4, 1 Victoria Road, Kinglake
Ph: 5786 1656
Monday to Friday 9am - 12noon & 1pm - 5pm

Bendigo Bank
Bigger than a bank.
bendigobank.com.au

Bendigo and Ashburton Bank Limited, ABN 11 008 048 176
AFSL, Australian Credit Licence 2327979, (0538888) (050 26)

Yarra Valley Valuations
Impartial, independent advisors & analysts since 1964
Incorporating Geoffrey Pege & Associates

Valuations for:

- Family Settlements
- Before you Buy/Sell
- Mortgage and Refinancing
- House Insurance Valuations
- Rating and Taxation Dispute
- Capital Gains Tax / Stamp Duty
- Depreciation Schedules
- Probate and Estate Valuations

Your post-fire property experts, Experience and Knowledge!

P.O. Box 121
Seville 3139
Ph: 5961 9176
admin@yv.com.au
www.yv.com.au