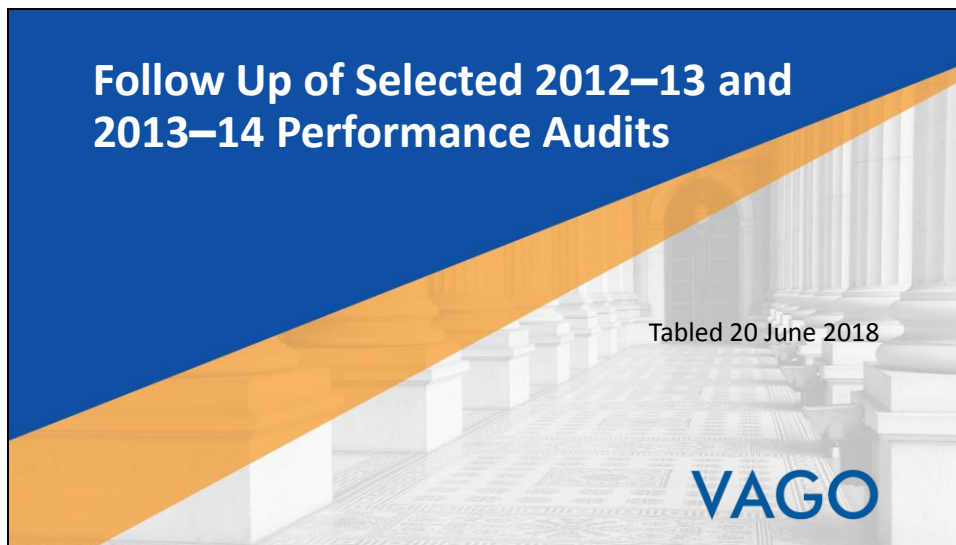


Slide 1



This presentation provides an overview of the Victorian Auditor-General's report *Follow Up of Selected 2012–13 and 2013–14 Performance Audits*.

## Introduction


**Follow up program**

 **Aim**

- Assess progress
- Improve accountability

 **Areas examined**

- Extent actions have addressed performance issues
- Timeliness of actions

  
*Management of  
Freshwater Fisheries*

  
*Managing Victoria's Native  
Forest Timber Resources*

This report forms part of our follow up audit program, where we assess agency progress in implementing recommendations from selected audits.


In this report, we examined agency progress in addressing recommendations from two audits tabled in 2013, *Management of Freshwater Fisheries*, and *Managing Victoria's Native Forest Timber Resources*.



Our follow up identified that some important improvements have been made across both audits, but that agencies' progress in addressing many of our recommendations has been slow, particularly for the timber audit.

While sustainable resource management is a challenge, the agencies need to do further work to better secure the health and use of Victoria's fisheries and timber resources for current and future generations.

### 2013 Management of Freshwater Fisheries: Summary



Examined whether the freshwater fisheries management approach was ecologically sustainable

What we found:

- Ecological sustainability not adequately planned or addressed
- Decisions not supported by robust information
- Performance objectives unclear and measures inadequate

**Freshwater recreational fishing**

- \$1b** in 2013–14
- 292 000** anglers

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Victorians greatly value our freshwater recreational fisheries, and the state derives considerable economic benefit from them.

Our 2013 audit assessed whether freshwater fisheries were being managed in an ecologically sustainable way, that protects and conserves fisheries, habitats and supporting ecosystems for future generations.

In the original audit, we found that the responsible agency had not adequately considered or addressed legislative objectives for the ecological sustainability of freshwater fisheries. It had not supported its management decisions with robust information; nor had it developed clear objectives and comprehensive performance measures.

We made nine recommendations to the responsible agency, which back then was the Department of Primary Industries and is now the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA).

***Management of Freshwater Fisheries: Progress***



- Recommendations—VFA has completed two of the nine recommendations, and is making progress on the remaining seven
- Management approach—new, more comprehensive draft Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan
- More informed decisions—improved data collection and broader evidence base underpin decisions
- Stakeholder engagement—now including natural resource managers as well as recreational fishing interests
- Performance reporting framework—new outcomes and objectives, but performance measures remain limited

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Since the original audit, VFA has completed two of the nine recommendations it was responsible for and is making progress on the remaining seven.

VFA's new draft Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan addresses many of the weaknesses that were inherent in its management planning approach in 2013, including a stronger focus on sustainability.

It has also put significant effort into collecting robust data to understand fisheries and inform its management decisions. It is also engaging more with natural resource managers. Natural resource managers are responsible for managing resources such as land, water, soil, plants and animals, including how people interact with them.

VFA has defined new outcomes and objectives for freshwater fisheries, although it has not yet developed a comprehensive performance reporting framework, including performance measures and indicators.

**Management of Freshwater Fisheries: Weaknesses**



- Fisheries management and stakeholder engagement plans not yet finalised
- Harvest strategy five years away

VFA needs to complete its key plans, harvest strategy and performance framework to:

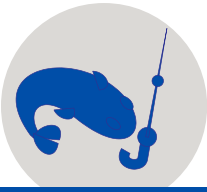
- cement progress to date
- drive further improvements needed

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VFA has not yet finalised its key management plans, and the harvest strategy that sets out a fishery's overall objectives, performance indicators and triggers for management action, is still five years away.

VFA needs to complete these to drive the further sustainability improvements needed.

**Recommendation**



**1** further recommendation  
for VFA

Prioritise timely development of the harvest strategy, engage with stakeholders and collect scientific data

7

In our follow up, we made one further recommendation to VFA, which was that it needs to prioritise the timely development of its harvest strategy and engage with fisheries stakeholders to collect robust and scientific data.

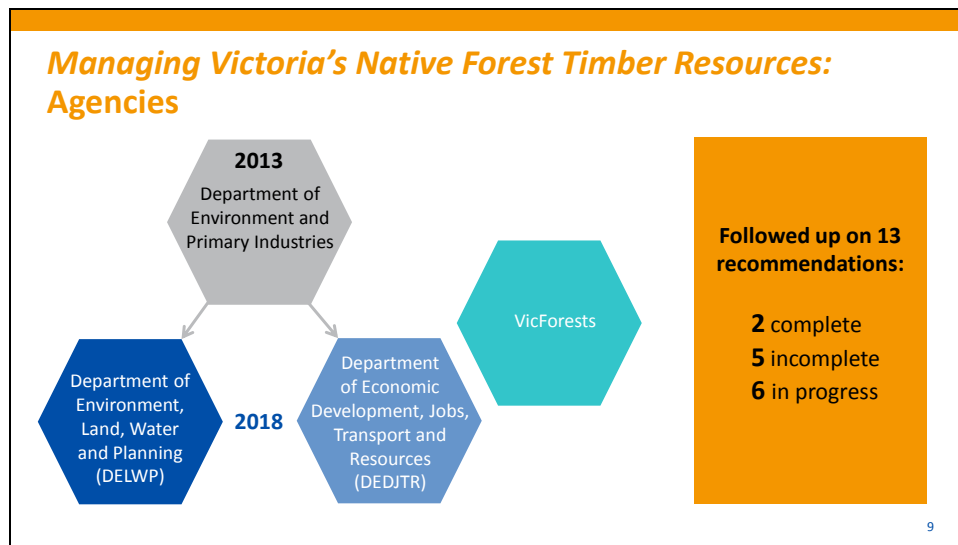


Native forest timber harvesting is allowed in Victoria’s 3 million hectares of state forest. The average annual area harvested over the last five years has been around 3 000 hectares. Forests have many other values in addition to timber—these include supporting biodiversity and clean water supplies, as well as providing cultural and recreational values.

Our 2013 audit examined whether the native forest timber resources on public land were being managed productively and sustainably, to optimise timber use, protect forest values and support regional communities.

In our original audit, we found that the responsible agencies had not adequately set sustainability goals, objectives and performance measures, and identified areas where harvesting could occur and the sustainable harvest level. They had also not effectively managed regeneration and delivered the management actions needed to protect forest values. Further their planning of future options and direction for the timber industry was inadequate.





For our follow up of the original timber audit, we audited three responsible agencies:

- the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, which we refer to as DELWP
- the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, which we refer to as DEDJTR, and
- VicForests.

In 2013, DELWP and DEDJTR's responsibilities were undertaken by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

In 2013, we made 11 recommendations but two were split between agencies, making 13 that we followed up on. Only two of these have been completed since the original audit, and there were five incomplete recommendations for which the agencies intended no further action.

**Managing Victoria's Native Forest Timber Resources: Progress**



**2018 areas of improved performance**

Setting harvest areas and levels

- VicForests improved harvest level planning

Regeneration practices

- DELWP increased seed store from <1 to 6.4 tonnes
- DEDJTR surveyed around a third of its regeneration backlog area

Protecting forest values—DELWP:

- Used research to inform management actions
- Introduced risk-based compliance audit program

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The agencies have delivered some key improvements in responding to our 2013 audit recommendations. These include:

- the improvements VicForests has made in planning sustainable harvest levels
- the increase in DELWP's seed store
- and DEDJTR's initial efforts to survey its regeneration backlog area and determine how much may need regenerating.

DELWP has also improved its use of research to inform biodiversity management actions, as well as adopting a revised, risk-based approach to its compliance activities. This includes its annual audits of VicForests' compliance with harvesting regulations.

### **Managing Victoria's Native Forest Timber Resources: Weaknesses**




- Forest management zoning has not improved
- Management and protections for forest values are insufficient
- Future regeneration concerns related to regrowing harvested areas
- The overarching goal for state forest management remains unclear
- DEDJTR does not have a strategic plan for the timber industry

Most recommendations from the timber audit are either still in progress or not complete. DELWP has not improved its process of using forest zoning to identify where harvesting can occur, and its management and protections of forest values are insufficient.

Across the three agencies, a number of weaknesses related to regrowing harvested areas raise concerns for future regeneration success.

Further, DELWP has not clarified the overarching goal for state forest management. DEDJTR does not have a strategic plan for the timber industry, and has not had one since 2014. It needs to develop one to strengthen the industry's resilience to potential future challenges.

**Recommendations**



**2** further recommendations for DELWP

- Review forest management zoning, as a priority
- Lead development of a clear goal for state forest management

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All three agencies need to complete further work to fully address the 2013 recommendations, and we have made two additional recommendations to DELWP, to review forest zoning and set a goal for state forest management, in collaboration with DEDJTR.

For further information, please view the full report on our website:  
[www.audit.vic.gov.au](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au)

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