



Calling a halt in a logged part of the Daylesford catchment area Scott Kinnear, Marcus Ward and Suresh Pathy discuss their concerns. Picture: ANDREW DE LA RUE

ALP members seek an end to Otways logging

By CLAIRE MILLER
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Victorian ALP members will demand an end to clearfelling and woodchipping in the Otway Ranges at their state conference in March.

The ALP Otway Ranges Interest Group will move a resolution to end clearfelling by June, 2002, and to create jobs in plantations and tourism with federal and state assistance.

Thirty ALP branches have already passed separate motions supporting an end to clearfelling. A spokesman for Environment and Conservation Minister Sherryl Garbutt said it was logical that some parts of the ALP would reflect community support to phase out logging in the Otways.

The government will consider its options following an independent review, which is expected to confirm that logging rates across the state are

unsustainable. Ms Garbutt's spokesman said the government was dealing with the economic and environmental future of regions and would not rush into making decisions.

Regarding the Wombat State Forest — which community and political activists have declared off limits for logging — he said there would be a public meeting in the town of Blackwood tonight for concerned people.

Nine groups, including Actively Conserving Trentham, the Blackwood Forest Protection Society, the Greens, and Liberals for Forests, have formed an alliance to stop logging in areas they deem important for water catchments, recreation and conservation.

Marcus Ward of the Cobaw and Wombat Forest Action Group said 80 per cent of the forest had been logged over the past 25 years and there were plans to log another 9 per cent this year. He urged the

government to redirect timber now exported for woodchips into value-added areas and introduce a program for plantations.

Suresh Pathy, Victorian convenor of Liberals for Forests, said the Wombat formed the headwaters of five state rivers including the Lerderderg and the Loddon.

He said there was "no forest left" in some catchments feeding into the water supply for Ballarat, Melton and Bacchus Marsh.

In East Gippsland, the managing director of Hallmark Oaks sawmills, Bob Humphreys, said he had been "reliably informed" that the region's sustainable yield would drop from 250,000 cubic metres to between 140,000 and 180,000 cubic metres.

The sustainable yield only covers logs for sawmilling. Lower quality logs, mostly exported for woodchips, are not counted.