

## Lawyers group aiming to protect native forests

Federal Court Justice Murray Wilcox last week launched a new environmental pressure group, Lawyers for Forests, at Flagstaff Chambers in Melbourne. The group intends to “fight for the conservation and better management of Victoria’s remaining native forests.”

Inaugural Lawyers for Forests president Lucy Turner said the organisation would bring lawyers’ analytical and advocacy skills to bear in a concerted way to protect the state’s forests for the future.

“We have been inspired by the significant impact the green movement, and particularly the anti-logging movement, had on the outcome in the recent WA election,” Turner said.

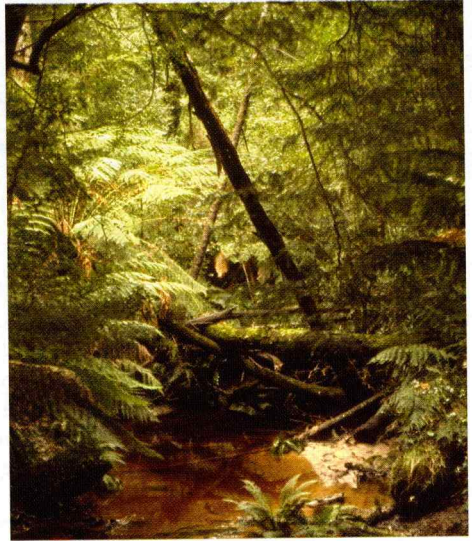
“We have also been inspired by the widespread, vigorous and growing support Lawyers for Forests is already receiving in the legal profession and beyond.

“We are motivated to ensure that the conservation and better management of Victoria’s remaining native forests is placed firmly on the agenda of Victorian and Federal politicians. We intend to attract a diverse membership within the profession, and be active on a number of levels to promote awareness of the issue and advocate change.”

Turner said the group will concentrate initially on law and policy. “This committee will analyse the regulatory framework applicable to the native forest sector in Victoria in order to advocate law reform which promotes the conservation and better management of our native forests,” she said.

“This committee will also lobby, and assist other groups to lobby, State and Federal governments to ensure that the decisions they make with respect to our forests are strictly in accordance with the law.”

Secondly, she said, the group will work on



access to justice, coordinating “legal professionals who are able to provide pro-active and reactive assistance to people involved in protests, blockades and other forms of direct action in an attempt to promote a more lawful and peaceful culture of public protest.

“Through this work, we intend to contribute the particular skills and powerful voice of legal professionals to the growing movement which demands, ultimately, the greater conservation and better management of our native forests, and in the short term, at least, compliance with the law.”

Finally Lawyers for Forests will promote corporate awareness.

“This committee will work to promote awareness about corporate interests in the native forest sector, in particular woodchipping companies, and the ways in which consumers can influence these companies through ethical investment decisions and shareholder activism,” Turner said.