

Media Release

5 April 2018

VicForests urges continued discussion with Mirboo North

VicForests said today that it respected the sentiments of South Gippsland Shire Council, which voted against native timber harvesting in Mirboo North.

“We urge the Council and the community to continue talking with us,” Alex Messina, VicForests General Manager Corporate Affairs said.

“There are further possibilities that could be explored together in constructive talks before harvesting is scheduled. VicForests’ door remains open.

“While we accept some community opposition will persist, we also believe strongly that good faith and productive engagement produces respectful outcomes for all interests,” Mr Messina said.

The Victorian Government allows harvesting in 6 percent of public forests. In any year, VicForests harvests about 0.04 percent – nominally equivalent to four trees in 10,000.

VicForests is a key contributor to regional and Gippsland economies generating about 2500 jobs and \$570m of annual economic activity for regional Victoria.

“We do this harvesting sustainably, and creating jobs and incomes for many Gippslanders whose livelihoods and families rely on our industry,” Mr Messina said.

The State’s timber industry peak body, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI), supports VicForests’ planned operations.

“With less than 0.04 percent of Victoria’s state forests currently being harvested and regenerated each year, this is a sustainable industry supporting regional jobs in harvest, haulage and processing, especially in Gippsland,” Tim Johnston, VAFI CEO said.

“Many of our members use the quality hardwood harvested from state forests to process into sought-after appearance grade furniture along with timber for use in home-building.

“We support VicForests’ plan for harvesting, recognising that changes have already been made to harvesting areas in response to community concerns.

“Timber harvesting and tourism have co-existed for many years in Victoria, including in many small regional communities and we look forward to this continuing,” Mr Johnston said.

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Background

On 28 March 2018 the South Gippsland Shire Council voted 1 for and 7 against native timber harvesting in Mirboo North.



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There are three areas available to be harvested for timber in Mirboo North that have been on the VicForests Timber Release Plan (TRP) since 2011.

Every year VicForests holds a community consultation period that lists any areas that have been added to or removed from its TRP after successfully regrowing.

VicForests commenced meeting with the Mirboo North community in August 2017 to talk about its upcoming plans to harvest up to 50 hectares of timber from State forest near the town.

VicForests has met with the community on a number of occasions and has been communicating regularly via email and phone.

The town hall meeting VicForests attended in September 2017 attracted around 300 local residents and gave VicForests the opportunity to discuss its plans and how to incorporate community feedback into its planning process.

The meeting in September was organised in order to give VicForests an idea of what things are most important to the community in the areas planned for harvest and how VicForests can work together to develop plans that balance the competing needs of all of its stakeholders.

As a result of these meetings, VicForests has amended its plans and added in extra buffers to ensure the Lyrebird Walk will not be affected by timber harvesting operations.

VicForests undertakes a multi-layered forest management planning process prior to any timber harvesting operation that takes into consideration a range of issues relating to the community, environment, government, economy and timber industry.

Timber harvesting operations will not commence in Mirboo North until sometime after Autumn 2019.

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