

# Media Release

23 February 2018

## VicForests Supports Regional Communities



*Image: VicForests sponsors Alexandra Primary School garden project*

The Rubicon State forest has been a vital resource in supplying quality timber products to Victorians and supporting the regional economy for more than 100 years.

Andy McGuire, Regional Manager VicForests, said that timber harvesting was historically the major industry of the region with more than eight sawmills operating in the early 1900s.

“Over the decades the volume of harvesting has dramatically reduced as our technology, planning and conservation practices have improved,” Mr McGuire said.

“The area that is still available to be sustainably harvested and regrown in the Rubicon is part of an industry that generates hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs to regional Victoria every year,” he said.

The Rubicon sits within the Central Highlands Regional Forest Area which generates more than \$500 million dollars and directly employs more than 2 000 people every year.

The 2018 harvesting operations in the Rubicon State forest will support 70-80 direct jobs and many more downstream jobs as the timber moves through the supply chain.

Mr McGuire said that VicForests contributes significantly to the Murrindindi Shire through sponsorship grants and timber donations to local community groups and events.

“In the last ten years, VicForests has contributed over \$80,000 to the local community by supporting the Alexandra Truck & Ute Show, several local school projects, sporting clubs, the woodworkers guild, UGFM and various other community groups, Mr McGuire said.

“Many of our staff and contractors live and work in this area so it is important to us that we continue to support the community in any way we can,” he said.

Mr McGuire said that VicForests understands timber harvesting can have some visual impacts and that they take care to minimise these around any important tourist attractions.

# Media Release

“Part of our planning process is to undertake a visual impact assessment to determine how we can reduce the impact our harvesting has on popular views,” Mr McGuire said.

Mr McGuire said VicForests follows a thorough planning process prior to commencing any harvesting and re-grows every area with the same type of forest that was originally there.

“When an area has just been harvested it can be quite confronting to look at, however, within a few years the visual impact has been dramatically reduced as the re-planted forest grows back,” Mr McGuire said.

“After around two years of regrowth, the eucalyptus seedlings have already grown to around the height of an average Australian male (1.8 metres),” he said.

Victoria is home to around 8 million hectares of forest, an area the size of Tasmania, of which only 6 percent is available to be harvested for timber.

“The amount of harvesting in the Rubicon State forest has not changed significantly in the last five to ten years, Mr McGuire said.

VicForests understands there are many passionate people either directly or indirectly impacted by timber harvesting and encourages the local community to raise specific concerns in order to incorporate these into its plans where possible.

-ends-

## Additional Information

VicForests is a State-owned business responsible for the harvest, sale and regrowing of timber from Victoria’s State forests.

There is around 8 million hectares of forest in Victoria, of which only 6% is available to be harvested for timber. VicForests harvests around 3000 hectares every year (0.04% of forest area in Victoria).

VicForests operations in the Rubicon will directly employ approximately 70-80 people. Four contractors employing 5 people each and using 5 haulage trucks each (44 people), Twelve VicForests supervisors and planners, 10 roading contractors, two regeneration staff, 10 DELWP compliance staff, three seed contractors, 1 mechanical disturbance contractor.

Most contractors employed in this area live locally and have been involved in the timber industry for over 50 years. One of which is a third generation timber harvesting contractor in the Rubicon Valley.

Products from these operations will provide quality furniture, flooring, staircases, housing construction, pallets and office paper.

Prior to any harvesting a thorough planning process is undertaken to consider the management of the many environmental and other values present in the forest.

A number of historical, cultural, environmental and social values have already been protected which include Leadbeater’s Possum habitat, Rainforest, old sawmilling tramways, Aboriginal features, streams and more.

The population of Victoria is expected to double in size, to 10 million, by the year 2050. With this continued rapid growth in population it is important that we look to use renewable resources such as timber to sustainably meet the growing housing demand.

VicForests is independently certified by Responsible Wood (formally AFS) which is endorsed by the world’s largest forest certification scheme; PEFC.