



Media Release

20 March 2018

VicForests Incorporates community feedback

After listening to the Noojee community VicForests has confirmed it will implement a 100 metre wide buffer on a timber harvesting coupe nearby to ensure the area will not be visible from the centre of town.

This buffer, which is an extension to the existing environmental buffers, was confirmed at an Open Day VicForests hosted in Noojee on Sunday 18 March.

VicForests assesses all timber harvesting coupes prior to harvest and had already put in place a 200 metre wide buffer to protect a stream within the coupe.

Charles Stansfield, VicForests Regional Manager West Gippsland, said that following concerns regarding the Greater Glider, VicForests has offered to take interested community members on a night time walk through the coupe to show how they assess for biodiversity.

"We have assessed the coupe for biodiversity and did not detect any high conservation values that indicate the presence of the Greater Glider," Mr Stansfield said.

"However as this was a main concern on Sunday, our Biodiversity Conservation and Research Manger invited some of the residents to join his team on a night-time spotlight survey of the coupe to show what elements we look for," he said.

Approximately 50 people, mainly locals, attended the Open Day with some interested parties dropping in from out of town to take part in the discussion.

"The Open Day was a great opportunity to speak to, and hear from, a range of people regarding our plans," Mr Stansfield said.

"We were able to explain our lengthy and detailed planning process and also hear about what is most important to the local community," he said.

"There were varying opinions from the attendees, some divided on whether timber harvesting should be taking place in the area at all, but most of the feedback was constructive and VicForests has accepted community preference for extra buffering and to be involved in a biodiversity night walk to review biodiversity." Mr Stansfield said.

"The two way feedback was very constructive in determining the harvest approach for our upcoming timber harvesting operations.

"We welcome the community to continue the discussion with VicForests and we will continue to provide regular updates regarding the planning, harvest and regrowing of the area," he said.

Operations are expected to commence in late April 2018.

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Background:

The 100 metre visual buffer is an extension of a 200 metre buffer that was already in place to protect a stream within the coupe.

Timber harvesting has been happening in Noojee for hundreds of years.

Planning for the first coupe, has been underway for seven years and operations are expected to commence late April/ early May 2018.

The first coupe is 30 hectares net and all coupes have areas reserved for environmental reasons such as future species habitat, streams, visual buffers etc.

Planning has followed a lengthy, detailed and highly regulated process assessing many environmental, cultural, social and other important values.

Desktop and field assessments were undertaken as they are for all coupes. These did not detect high conservation values so a targeted species survey was not required.

VicForests has been in regular communication with the local community over the past six months including three public meetings and regular email and phone engagement.

Timber from this operation will produce products for local sawmills including high quality furniture, flooring, staircases, and writing and office paper.

There is only a small amount (6%) of Victoria's forest available to harvest and VicForests only harvest regrow 3,000 hectares (0.04% of Victoria's total forest area) each year.

VicForests regrows all harvested areas with the same species of trees that were there prior.

The native timber industry contributes hundreds of millions of dollars and supports thousands of jobs to Vic regional economy each year.