

Media Statement

15 February 2018

VicForests Media Statement following protests in Strathbogie State forest

Bill Paul, VicForests Community Forestry Manager said:

“Protestors are blocking the road leading into the Strathbogie State forest in order to stop timber harvesting operations from commencing.

“This harvesting is part of ongoing operations that occur following a multi-layered planning process that considers the management of the many environmental and other values present in the forest.

“Over the last few years, VicForests has met with local community members on many occasions to better understand their concerns and explain our process.

“As a result of this engagement, we have agreed to use a significantly low intensity harvesting method in the Strathbogies known as single-tree selection.

“Single-tree selection only removes around 50 per cent of trees in the planned area and leaves behind trees of varying ages to either grow larger or provide habitat for native species.

“Last year Arthur Rylah Institute conducted surveys looking for threatened species including Greater Gliders and VicForests used this survey information to guide our harvest plans.

“Following this, our Conservation Biologist spent three days walking the area with a conservation focus and individually marking trees to ensure best available habitat is protected for the Greater Glider.

“Once harvesting commences our Conservation Biologist will spend one day a week ensuring the contractor is applying appropriate protection measures for the Glider.

“It is important that we balancing environmental conservation with the demand for timber products.

“We are working with relevant government agencies and our contractors to resolve this situation.”

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Background information:

Timber harvesting has occurred in the Strathbogies State forest for hundreds of years and this area has been previously harvested for timber.

There is only a small amount (6%) of Victoria’s forest available to harvest – we only harvest 0.04% each year. The area being harvested in this region is only 0.1% of the total Strathbogies forest.

We need to access different areas to remain sustainable and meet demands for various types and volumes of timber. Each area produces unique timber.

This operation is important to the local economy as it will support around 25 direct jobs and many more jobs down-stream.

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The timber from this operations will produce quality furniture, flooring, staircases and structural housing products as well as firewood and paper.

The Greater Glider was listed as Threatened last year but there is no current obligations in place while the Department of Land Water and Planning develop an action statement for the species.

VicForests have gone beyond our obligations and created an interim prescription to protect the Glider by reserving best available habitat.

Prior to this operation our Conservation Biologist spent three days walking the area with a conservation focus and individually marking trees to ensure best available habitat is protected for the Greater Glider.

Once harvesting commences our Conservation Biologist will spend one day a week ensuring the contractor is applying appropriate protection measures for the Glider.

VicForests will also ensure other native and threatened species are protected. Koalas will be protected by looking up each individual tree to spot a koala.

It is important that we balancing environmental conservation with the demand for timber products. VicForests had initially planned to use clearfell harvesting in the Strathbogies forest.

The clearfell method removes the majority of the trees at the site to access the available timber, leaving four trees per hectare to provide future habitat and buffering approximately 30% of the area for biodiversity reasons.

Clearfell is the most reliable method for achieving successful forest regrowth after harvesting and is the safest harvesting system for forest workers.

VicForests began engaging with the Strathbogies Sustainable Forest Group in 2014 and has met with the community on many occasions to better understand thier concerns and explain our process.

As a result of this engagement, we have agreed to use a significantly low intensity harvesting method in the Strathbogies known as single-tree selection.

Single-tree selection only removes around 50 per cent of trees in the planned area and leaves behind trees of varying ages. The younger ones are left to grow larger and the older ones are left to grow old and provide future habitat for native species.

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