

Friday, December 18, 2015

## **VicForests postpones harvesting to facilitate discussion**

VicForests has chosen to postpone harvesting operations on a site north of Orbost in East Gippsland.

Acting CEO, Lachlan Spencer, said the operation on Jacks Rd is legal and complies with the regulations which govern native timber harvesting in Victoria.

“The decision to suspend the operation was made to support the current Forest Industry Taskforce by allowing further discussions to take place between the Taskforce’s Working Group on Coupes.

“The Working Group is considering the planned harvesting on a number of sites which have been identified by stakeholders as containing high conservation values,” Mr Spencer said.

“We are committed to supporting the work being done by the Taskforce and have chosen to suspend harvesting to assist discussions between the various stakeholders involved in this process,” he said.

Mr Spencer said VicForests staff inspected the Jacks Rd site on Tuesday following concerns raised by lawyers representing a local environment group.

“Staff found that all environmental values on the site requiring protection have been appropriately managed including an area of rainforest which was correctly buffered and excluded from harvesting before operations began,” he said.

“VicForests strongly believes this operation is legal and the decision to postpone harvesting does not indicate any illegal activity by our staff or contractors.”

The Forest Industry Taskforce is currently working on recommendations regarding the protection of biodiversity and future issues in the timber industry.

“While there will be no more harvesting on the site in the short term, timber already harvested will be taken to local mills and any further work needed to make the site safe will also be undertaken,” Mr Spencer said.

“Suspending harvesting causes disruption for both our staff and contractors and we thank those affected for their patience and understanding.

“We hope the important work being done by the Forest Industry Taskforce will assist in providing increased certainty in the future and look forward to the outcomes of this process,” he said.