



Incorporated Association No A0052863V

PO Box 1061  
Wangaratta VIC 3676

6<sup>th</sup> October 2009

**ENGAGEMENT PROCESS:**

Key Questions: What was good? What was not so good/bad/missing? What can be improved?  
Stakeholders: the PFDC's, AFG, A3P, TTV, FFGV.

**DATE:**

**TO: MINISTER JACINTA ALLAN MP**

**SUBMISSION: DISCUSSION PAPER PROVINCIAL VICTORIA: DIRECTIONS FOR THE NEXT DECADE**

Trees Victoria is a new incorporated association. It has the broad aim of providing stakeholders with a state wide forum to act collaboratively on issues related to growing trees and to facilitate the expansion and development of tree growing and **carbon sequestration** and the associated timber industry in Victoria. It has a focus on the issues related to growing trees **on private land** and the industry associated with that resource and its management.

Trees Victoria has been formed with the support and involvement of the four Victorian Private Forestry Development Committees (PFDC's): Gippsland Private Forestry, Plantations North East, Central Victorian Farm Plantations, and Green Triangle Regional Plantation Committee. So, Trees Victoria represents the views of stakeholders across the state engaged in the growing, managing, harvesting, transport, and regional processing and export of logs grown on private land across Victoria. Trees Victoria also represents the views of those with an interest in growing fibre for other non wood uses, including carbon sequestration and non fossil biofuels.

**Trees Victoria wishes to make the following submission to the Directions Discussion Paper.**

## GENERAL

Trees Victoria, and its formation organisations, the regional PFDC's, in the past year made major submissions to the state government Timber Industry Strategy.

The submissions focussed on these issues:

- The potential of the sector to grow wood and biofuels for regional processing and supply
- The potential for investment and employment growth based on the current regional capacity of the sector across most of Victoria
- Planning Certainty that can reduce sovereign risk for investors
- Local government inconsistent approaches to tree growing, harvesting, transport and processing
- Lack of investment in softwood plantation resources

The timeframe for development of tree resources is essentially long term: trees planted now will generate resources in a decade or more from now.

The general issues that relate directly to the Discussion Paper and the specifics relating to the regional planning areas are covered below.

### SECTION 3. PLANNING FOR THE NEXT DECADE

Farm Production: this section mentions Farm Production, but there is no mention of timber production, itself a significant contributor through the last decade in terms of investment, processing, and export income.

The Way People Live: This section has a gap: no reference to affordable and sustainable housing, the area where timber has a clear advantage in terms of construction and climate costs.

### SECTION 4. NEXT STEPS: FIVE PROPOSED NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The five key proposed strategic directions are broadly supported. This submission will focus on directions 1 and 3.

- Position regional economies for growth  
The regional economies do need to diversify away from reliance on dairy and other traditional agriculture that are both subject to external commodity price shocks and to annual severe climate events as well as ongoing climate change.

Additional action: Facilitate a series of regional plans for investment and jobs growth based on private investment in carbon positive tree crops across all regions. (Note that tree crops in the Mallee regions can also provide an on farm option for many farmers: see Attachment 2)

- Plan for sustainable growth

Trees Victoria strongly supports the proposal to work in collaboration with partners to ensure the sustainable use of land, and likewise the actions outlined.

The carbon positive resource base that trees provide can contribute to actions 1, 2: providing biofuels is added to the list of renewable, 3, and most particularly action 4.

Actions 3 and 4 can both be addressed with regional action plans for investment in resource for biofuels and wood production

#### Section 5. A NEW MODEL FOR REGIONAL PLANNING

Trees Victoria's partners have been planning and investing on a regional long term basis for decades. Most of the partners submissions to government have raised issues around local variations of application of state planning policies as a major hurdle/frustration/time and money waster. It was pleasing to see that the Draft TIS did recognise that. So, the principle is supported.

The framework for regional plans introduces new subregions that sometimes spread across the regions currently recognised by governments. There is a risk - the potential for new, or sustained local variations to emerge.

#### Gippsland Region:

There is a significant gap in the description of the regional economy.

#### Gaps

1. The contribution of the timber industry to regions, in particular Gippsland is not recognised. (Refer attached submission to the VCEC). Specifically, the potential to leverage from the major investments in the pulp and paper industry, (and overseas investment by Nippon Paper in the Latrobe Valley), needs to be included: similar to the recognition of the Green Triangle timber resource investment in the Barwon South West Region.
2. The potential, recognised in the past, for tree planting to offset and sequester carbon as an action that can be undertaken with known impacts vis a vis the reliance on carbon capture technology should be included.

#### Hume Region: Upper Hume and Central Hume

The scale and significance of the timber industry in these areas is another gap in the document. As a result there is an implication that much of the broadacre land use in the area is just grazing. A particular challenge in the two areas is the facilitation of investment in expansion of the plantation areas to drive expansion of regional and value added processing at Myrtleford, Wangaratta, Benalla, and Albury Wodonga, where existing businesses are now constrained for growth by the lack of supply. As one company manager put it:

*It is curious that the timber industry is only mentioned in the discussion paper in the context of " Lower Hume" around Yea Seymour area, when most of the action occurs in the northern parts. I include NS newsprint mill here as a significant number of employees and goods and services come from Victoria.*

*As we have discussed before, there is opportunity particularly in the "Upper/Middle Hume" region to further develop industrial scale *P.radiata* plantations because of the long term demand for plantation grown products and diminishing viability of some existing farming enterprises. This is consistent with the Sustainable growth strategic direction on page 14 of the discussion paper. The thrust of the (Draft) Timber Industry strategy also supports this.*

(The timber industry is mentioned in the Lower Hume, that relates to the industry based on resource supply from public land native forest, much of which was burnt in 2009 and 2006.) Studies have identified the social and economic potential and issues related to a significant expansion of plantations: Attachment 4.

#### **Grampians Region: Wimmera Southern Mallee**

The vast areas of broadacre cropping in this region have been created by land clearing over time to the point often where the only trees are those on roadsides. This amounts to about 1% of the land, formerly 100% before clearing from 1880 – 1980. The inclusion of mallees and other trees as a long term sustainable crop **to a level of 5% on farms** would have major carbon sequestration, environmental, biofuel, and wood production benefits as well as on farm shade and shelter. The potential to reduce the soil erosion problems that overcropping can lead to will help maintain the annual cropping potential for the remaining 95%.

#### **QUESTION 1: DO THE PROPOSED STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS PROVIDE A CLEAR BASIS FOR ACTION? ARE THERE GAPS?**

Gaps: see above

##### Clear Basis for Action

Recognise and facilitate the contribution that tree growing on private land can make to carbon sequestration and biofuels across the state, in particular dryland annual cropping and grazing areas across the state (See Attachment )

#### **QUESTION 2: WHAT DO YOU REGARD AS THE KEY AREAS FOR ACTION IN EACH STRATEGIC DIRECTION?**

**Regional Planning: see above and below**

#### **QUESTION 3: HOW WILL THE NEW APPROACH TO REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING BENEFIT YOU?**

Trees Victoria believed that the many benefits for tree growing on private land will be fully realised only when the regional planning processes deliver certainty and a consistent regional, or even better, statewide approach to land use planning, compared with the current local variations that are a problem for any resource grown on a long term basis. The NSW government made tree growing subject to statewide planning some ten years or more ago. The large scale investment in expansion of softwood plantations and processing in the Riverina region followed that change.

If this new approach can replace the interminable and expensive MSS review process currently in the VPP's, then again, all the better. I am not aware of any new land use initiative that has been successfully identified, justified, evidenced, supported by a council or a panel in the review process, and survived the usual three years it takes to get signed off by the Minister. The system operates to maintain the status quo. So, the only way to get a land use change through now in a timely manner is to go ultimately to the Minister.

Yours sincerely



**Tony Richardson**  
Chairperson



**Lyn Coulston**  
Deputy Chairperson

**Trees Victoria**

Please address all email correspondence at this time to:  
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**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Stakeholders consulted: Malcolm Alexander: Norske Skog, Alpine MDF, AFG, A3P, industry and grower businesses in Gippsland, and North East Victoria
2. Submission to VCEC Inquiry into Rural and Regional Victoria 2005
3. Oil Mallee industry development plan for Western Australia
4. Social Dimensions of plantation expansion in north east Victoria Report No 38 Institute for Land Water and Society Charles Sturt University
5. Submission to state Timber Industry Strategy.
6. Objectives of Trees Victoria

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Attachment 6:

**Objectives of Trees Victoria, Inc :**

The objectives of the Association shall be to provide a statewide forum to act collaboratively on issues related to growing trees and to facilitate the expansion and development of tree growing and carbon sequestration and the associated timber industry in Victoria.

The activities shall include, but not necessarily confined to, those which will;

- Advance and expand tree growing in Victoria.
- Promote the expansion of private forestry as a means of increasing wood supply and carbon sequestration in Victoria.
- Facilitate the development of regional infrastructure which is integral to developing and maintaining an efficient timber industry.
- Promote community understanding of the timber industry, especially its contribution to the areas of economic and social development, and particularly to the environment in this time of climate change.
- Liaise with all levels of government to promote awareness of the timber industry in order to gain their active support, and facilitate opportunities for expansion of tree growing.
- Provide a statewide collaborative forum to identify and resolve issues related to growing trees.