



Socio-economic impacts of land use change in the Green Triangle and Central Victoria

Project Update #4 March 2008

Welcome to the fourth update for the 'Socio-economic impacts of land use change in the Green Triangle and Central Victoria' research project. Updates are being provided as publications become available, to keep you in touch with progress of the three studies being undertaken in the project:

- Community attitudes and values survey
- Quantifying and analysing land use and socio-economic change
- Survey of landholders who have changed land use to plantation forestry

The latest news is that our first research report, *Living with land use change: different views and perspectives*, has just been released.

Go to the results and reports section of www.landusechange.net.au to download a copy of the executive summary or full report. If you do not have internet access, please contact Prue Borschmann (details overleaf) for a printed copy.

Living with land use change: different views and perspectives — what is the report telling us?

Land use changes provoke ongoing debate and sometimes conflict amongst residents of the region, who are each affected in different ways by particular types of land use change.

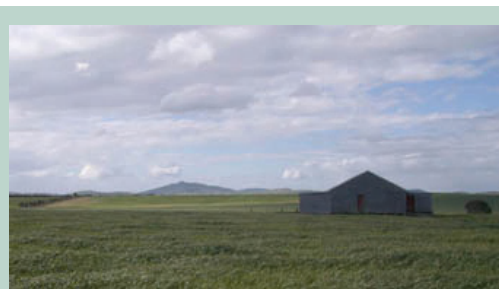
The *Living with land use change* report documents the perceptions of 57 residents about the nature of land use change, and how it has affected their lives and the communities they live in. Through their

participation in one of eight group interviews, these residents described many types of land use change occurring in recent decades.

The land use changes that participants most commonly ranked as important were: increases in blue gum plantations; increased cropping; changes in water availability, use and regulation; changes to dairy farming; farm amalgamation/increased farm size; and rural residential expansion

Participants identified that land use change may involve change in some or all of the following: the area of land used; the number of people employed; the local and regional economic activity dependent on different land uses; the way a land use is undertaken (e.g. technology used; methods and efficiency of production); and the volume and value of goods produced.

This range of types of change is important to recognise. A change in intensity or efficiency of land use can have socioeconomic consequences that are as significant as those resulting from change in the total area of land being used for a particular purpose.



The *Living with land use change* report shows that experiences of land use change greatly vary between different residents right across the study region.

Different land use changes were believed to have different impacts. For example:

- Expansion of blue gum plantations, expansion of cropping and farm amalgamation are commonly – but not always – believed to be associated with decreases in rural population. There are more divergent opinions on their impacts on local and regional economic activity.
- Expansion of dairy farming is commonly believed to increase local employment and economic activity.
- Expansion of rural residential properties is associated with bringing new people into the region, but with varying impacts, which largely depend on how well new residents integrate into the community.

The report details these and many more views about the impacts of land use change.

Sometimes participants did not agree with each other about the impacts of particular land use changes. The report makes no attempt to evaluate which views are ‘correct’. Instead it focuses on describing the multiple ways land use change is experienced.

The land use changes identified and discussed by participants have the potential to lead to significant change in the region’s communities and economy.

The findings of the interviews were used to inform subsequent development of the various components of the Land Use Change study. Progress on each of these is as follows:

1. Community attitudes and values survey

Data is being analysed from the resident views postal survey and the more recent on-the-street interviews. These analyses will

quantify the extent to which some of the views expressed by interviewees of the *Living with land use change* report are held by the community in general.

2. Quantifying and analysing land use and socio-economic change

This part of the project is still in analysis stages. The last of the data needed to analyse land use change is expected to be released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in April this year. Following this, expert focus groups will be held in which participants will assist in interpreting data on land use and socio-economic change.

3. Survey of landholders who have changed land use to plantation forestry

Of the 262 landholders who were sent a survey on their experiences of changing land use to plantation forestry and/or incorporating farm forestry, 60% returned surveys. The data these landholders are providing will enable analysis of the population shifts that may result from the establishment of plantations via farm forestry, leasing of land and sale of land to plantation companies. It will also identify the costs and benefits these different forms of plantation and farm forestry have had for the landholders involved.

Reports coming soon:

Understanding resident views on land use change	May 2008
Impacts of land use change to farm forestry and plantation forestry: landholder survey results	June 2008
Employment and spending: comparing the activity generated by different primary industries	Sept 2008
Socio-economic impacts of land use change: what do the statistics tell us?	Sept 2008
Socio-economic impacts of land use change: Summary report & Integration report	Sept 2008