



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

### MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 27th November, 2008

## New report documents social impacts of land use change to plantation forestry

A new research report, released today, provides answers to often asked questions about the impacts of expansion of bluegum plantations in rural communities.

The report, *Impacts of land use change to farm forestry and plantation forestry*, is a study of landholders who have sold or leased properties to plantation companies, or established their own farm forestry.

“We found some results which surprised us, as well as some which confirmed common perceptions about the impacts of plantation expansion on rural population levels” said Dr Jacki Schirmer (Australian National University), Project Leader. “We found that the sale of land to plantation companies results in a much smaller decline in rural population than commonly believed, with a net loss of generally less than 10% of the population who lived on properties prior to plantation establishment. However, we did find that this land use change leads to quite high population turnover, with the previous residents often shifting off land established to plantations, and new residents shifting in.”

“We need to better understand the social impacts of this turnover in population, as it can be challenging for both existing and new residents in rural communities to adjust to these changes,” she said.

“This report gives rural communities, government and industry decision-makers valuable information on what changes result from plantation expansion,” said Cr Karen Stephens (Glenelg Shire Council), Chairman of the Advisory Group and Steering Committee. “The results tell us that we need to focus more attention on helping new residents integrate into rural communities.”

The study found that:

- Around half of the rural properties established to plantations have no-one living on them before the land use change to plantation forestry

Where people are living on properties before the shift to trees, they shift off the property in 75% of cases where land is sold to a plantation company and 10% of cases where land is leased to a plantation company. When a landholder establishes their own farm forestry, there is no impact on the number of people living on rural properties

- In up to 80% of cases, new people then shift onto the houses on plantation properties

- Sale of land to a plantation company led to changes in membership of rural fire fighting groups and local sports groups in just over 50% of cases. In about half of these, the landholder ceased membership of the group altogether, while in the other half they changed the location of their group membership
- The establishment of plantations often resulted in removal of some fencing on properties, but in 96% of cases existing housing was left on the property, and subsequently subdivided and sold, or rented

The report details these and many more detailed results. Copies can be downloaded at [www.landusechange.net.au](http://www.landusechange.net.au). It is one of a series of publications from the *Socio-economic impacts of land use change* research project, studying a region extending from Robe in South Australia to Colac in Victoria. The project is funded by 11 organisations with an interest in land use change, and guided by an advisory group of residents from the study region.

Further results from the study are being released in the week starting December 8<sup>th</sup>, and from December 8-11<sup>th</sup> public seminars will be held in which the results of the *Land Use Change* project are discussed (see below for seminar locations and times).

**For more information:**

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**Project website:** [www.landusechange.net.au](http://www.landusechange.net.au)

***Land Use Change* public seminar series – December 2008**

The results of the *Land Use Change* project will be presented at a series of six public seminars over December 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. The seminars will discuss the extent of each land use change, how it is perceived and experienced by different people, and what socio-economic changes have accompanied it. Anyone with an interest in the social dimensions of land use change is encouraged to attend the seminars.

**Seminar locations and times**

Town	Date	Time	Venue
Timboon	Monday Dec 8 <sup>th</sup>	1-3pm	Timboon District Hall Address: 98 Bailey St, Timboon
Mortlake	Monday Dec 8 <sup>th</sup>	7-9pm	Mortlake Memorial Hall Address: Shaw St, Mortlake
Hamilton	Tuesday Dec 9 <sup>th</sup>	2-4pm	DPI Victoria offices, Theatrette Address: Mount Napier Rd, Hamilton
Casterton	Tuesday Dec 9 <sup>th</sup>	7-9pm	Casterton Town Hall Address: 67 Henty St, Casterton
Penola	Wednesday Dec 10 <sup>th</sup>	7-9pm	Chardonnay Lodge Address: Riddoch Highway, Coonawarra
Horsham	Thursday Dec 11 <sup>th</sup>	1-3pm	DPI Victoria, Yellow-gum room Address: 110 Natimuk Rd, Horsham

'Socio-economic impacts of land use change in the Green Triangle and Central Victoria' research project  
Research providers: Australian National University, University of Melbourne, and Victorian Govt Department of Primary Industries.

The following organisations have contributed cash or in-kind funding to the project (in alphabetical order): Central Victorian Farm Plantations, Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Forest and Wood Products Australia, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, Glenelg Shire Council, Green Triangle Regional Plantation Committee, Moyne Shire Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council, Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries, and Wattle Range Council. This project is proudly hosted by the Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry