

MODERISATION OF VICTORIA'S REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENTS AND FOREST MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Participant summary notes - What are some key messages and insights from your discussion topics?

The views and opinions expressed in these summary notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency of the Victorian Government. This report was written by the councils in attendance at the round table and captures the key points of discussion, as determined by the participants. It does not represent the views of all councils, nor does it comprehensively capture the full range of views and perspectives of those present.

Wednesday, 3 October 2018

Organisations attended

Murrindindi Shire Council

Strathbogie Shire Council

Wellington Shire Council

Other organisations invited

Alpine Shire Council

Baw Baw Shire Council

Benalla Rural City Council

Colac-Otway Shire Council

Corangamite Shire Council

East Gippsland Shire Council

Gannawarra Shire Council

Latrobe City Council

Mitchell Shire Council

Municipal Association of Victoria

Towong Shire Council

Rural City of Wangaratta

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Government organisations present

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Discussion Topic No. 1 – Building trust with communities

<p>1. How can Local Government support communication and engagement activities to help build trust and enable meaningful involvement of communities in this program?</p>	<p>2. How will meaningful engagement with communities be managed/delivered?</p>
<p>1. Senior Executive needs to be involved and drive the agenda.</p>	<p>1. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to lead engagement. Local Government involvement may include existing forums. Engagement to be ongoing.</p>
	<p>2. DELWP to fund a full-time resource to embed the engagement within Regional areas.</p>
	<p>3. A range of opportunities to be provided to ensure that all members of the community are heard and listened to. Not just the loudest voice.</p>
	<p>Start by rebuilding trust in key groups e.g. DELWP, VicForests. The role of the regulator is effectively silent in the community.</p>
	<p>Engage communities rather than or as well as interest groups. Draw on other engagement about what the community thinks is important.</p>

3. How do we improve and strengthen communication with our communities about forest management in an ongoing way?	4. How do we best educate local government and our communities about forest management to enable informed involvement?
<p>1. Engage, communicate with an intent to understand, learn and evolve the conversation and perspectives. Encourage engagement of local community through existing networks.</p>	<p>1. Expand the “Forest Hub’ currently run at Latrobe and Wellington Shires to educate school groups and community about the whole timber industry (nursery to manufactured products and everything in between).</p>
<p>2. Open examination of all aspects that cause concern / jobs important focus of State Government but that’s not what is most important to all local communities. Needs to be greater transparency / honest examination of all the costs plus benefits of the timber industry.</p>	<p>2. There is a legacy with Local Government not previously being involved in forest management. This will be a barrier to overcome in the community.</p>
<p>3. Create a program with Councils about forest management enabling equal input from community, Councils, State Government, Industry without “fear or favour” (open, safe and accountable).</p>	<p>3. Why does Local Government need to be educated? This infers that there is something to be done to Local Government. Maybe start by responding to issues raised already e.g. funding for infrastructure. Go to Local Government rather than vice-versa.</p>

Discussion Topic No. 2 – Effectively managing change

1. What are the likely changes that forest-based industries will experience over the next 10-20 years?	2. How can we actively manage changes to maximise benefits (and minimise impacts) on local communities?
<p>1. Declining rural opportunities in local communities and climate change are forcing deep and persistent disadvantage. These are opening considerations of diversifying income which will see changes to local economies, i.e. increasing tourism, declining native forestry, increasing plantation forestry and carbon farming and decreasing traditional agriculture.</p>	<p>1. Re-imagining the changes that need to happen in the industry, such as 1) provide policy settings to incentivise carbon credits through forest management 2) apply a 'user pays' system to forest/uses 3) ensure our timber industry of the future achieves FSC and or other sustainability certification to feed into high end markets and 4) value add to industries by investing in innovation and new technologies evolving the 'forestry' mindset 5) address the uneven distribution of costs and benefits i.e. impacts on local government and ecological infrastructure.</p>
<p>2. Forests can help mitigate climate change impacts. Forests through condensation and transpiration encourage rainfall in local regions. The evidence of this has been compiled by scientists over many decades. This will change how forests are valued into the future. In a time of drought and ongoing climate change, regional Victoria will need to carefully consider how much native forest is harvested.</p>	
<p>3. Plan for an ongoing partnership with local communities as a core part of the planning and management process.</p>	

Discussion Topic No. 3 – Reinvigorating communities across Victoria

1. What opportunities do the Regional Forest Agreements present to reinvigorate communities across Victoria?	2. What opportunities do the Regional Forest Agreements present to diversify the economic base of regional communities?
<p>1. Broader engagement needs to happen with communities, ensuring they understand they are heard, on their aspirations for the future, including with indigenous communities in the management of forests.</p>	<p>1. Engaging in citizen science programs in partnership with DELWP and using opportunity for greater interaction with DEDJTR are exciting for community and local government. Programs around plantations and carbon farming.</p>
<p>2. Move from the assumption that the timber industry is the best use of the forest and promote diversification of industries for economic opportunity.</p>	<p>2. Opportunities for big business and sole traders include tourism, plantations, carbon farming (tax credits), timber artisan trades. Remove barriers e.g. Commonwealth legislation (EPBC Act) or create incentives (tax credits). Quality high value product <u>not</u> wood-chips.</p>
<p>3. Link conservation with recreation and tourism (not about “locking it up”).</p>	<p>3. Connecting Traditional Owner Groups and knowledge with that of other forest users and forest managers (e.g. inter-generational knowledge and mountain cattlemen’s association, burning practices).</p>

Discussion Topic No. 4 – Managing cross border issues

<p>1. What is the nature and scale of cross-border issues relating to timber production (e.g. impacts on infrastructure, impacts on other forest-based industries, employment etc.)?</p>	<p>2. How could these issues be reduced/addressed?</p>
<p>1. Need to understand “two-way” implications - e.g. infrastructure used for timber industry is also shared and relied on by other industries</p>	<p>1. User pays - consider the use of technology e.g. E Tags to fund the maintenance and development of roads and infrastructure. This could be used to collect data to help with compliance and enforcement in the forest and this money is spent where the impact is.</p>
<p>2. Cost of maintenance and development of roads to be shared by users and DELWP not just funded by Local Government. Understand consequence of not maintaining roads for all users</p>	<p>2. Education around bushfire risk and understanding how the management of forests and burning regimes impact that risk.</p>
<p>3. Need to fully understand and communicate the impact on bushfire risk associated with timber harvesting.</p>	<p>3. Acknowledge and collect data on all forest uses and the socio-economic opportunities they generate. E.g. hunting, 4WD, mountain biking.</p>
<p>4. There is a divide between where timber is harvested and where the value adding jobs are. A structured and informed response is required to address the issue of equity.</p>	
<p>5. Analysis of crash data to determine the impact that timber operations on local roads has on other road users specifically road safety.</p>	