

MEDIA RELEASE



TCA Ltd
Victorian State Office
333 Maroondah Hwy
(PO Box 246)
Healesville Vic 3777
Ph: (03) 5962 1874
Fx: (03) 5962 1873
scott.gentle@tca.org.au
ABN. 33 008 665 736

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BUDGET SUPPORTS TIMBER COMMUNITIES

Tuesdays budget was a relief for Timber Communities with the Government backing up its pre election promises by allocating funds for timber dependent communities in the Otway's and East Gippsland.

The Otway's transition commits \$2.7 million over two years to assist timber workers in retraining or finding alternative employment. A further \$1.8 million has been committed to East Gippsland to assist in the transition from old growth forests to regrowth forests.

“This is a clear message from the Government that it believes in a sustainable timber industry” said Mr. Scott Gentle, Victorian State Manager of Timber Communities Australia.

“Timber workers in the Otway's can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that there is financial assistance for retraining, enabling them to find other work when harvesting is phased out in 2008” said Mr. Gentle.

East Gippslands forests have been a source of conflict between timber workers and radical environmentalists for many years. The allocation of \$1 million to enable better recovery and utilization of smaller logs will see the industry sustain jobs and investment into the future.

“The timber industry has been used as a political football for too long and it is great to see the Bracks government signaling full time for the forest debate” said Mr. Gentle. Over the last 5 years the timber industry has been reduced by 30% in the name of sustainability and accepted the pain of cutbacks.

With the recent announcement of \$22 million for expansion of timber salvage operations after the 2007 fires and now the further commitment of \$4.5 million in the budget to timber workers in the Otway's and East Gippsland, timber communities can feel they have a future in providing an industry that has environmental and economic benefits for Victoria

“The government has displayed its commitment to a Sustainable timber industry and it is now time that environmentalists recognize that the balance has been found and forestry is no longer an issue.” concluded Mr. Gentle.

For further information call:

Scott Gentle, Victorian State Manager 0438 556 020