

MEDIA RELEASE



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VEAC FEELS BELITTLED AND THREATENED

The Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) last night was again confronted by community people whose livelihoods are under threat in Cohuna due to the investigation into the Redgum Forests said Timber Communities Australia.

“Over 110 people turned up at Cohuna in an attempt to be heard as one by VEAC in true country style consultation but again were refused to be seen by Chairman Duncan Malcolm”, said Mr. Scott Gentle, Victorian State Manager of national grassroots community organization Timber Communities Australia (TCA).

“VEAC Chairman, Duncan Malcolm accused the community representatives of belittling and threatening him and the VEAC process and said they had decided that community meetings were not the way they wanted their consultation to go”, said Mr. Gentle.

It is outrageous that a paid chairman can accuse the community of belittling him when he is responsible for comments in the VEAC report such as “*At an individual level there are also a range of potential impacts on the loss of employment for individuals and their families including poverty and financial hardship, reduced future work opportunities, reduced participation in mainstream community life, strains in family relationships, and intergenerational welfare dependency.*” (page 85 of VEAC Report)

“Who is belittling and threatening who Mr. Chairman?”

“Surely after 2 nights where over 190 people have turned out in force to be heard VEAC should realize that their method of consultation is city centric and not the preferred choice of those who will be impacted upon by their short sited, scientifically challenged report”, Mr. Gentle said.

“Country people want to be heard together, they want to have the opportunity to listen to the concerns and issues raised by their fellow community members not be forced into cloak and dagger style consultation where we are left with no choice but to believe what the VEAC councilors and staff tell us.”

“VEAC have not listened to the community to this point and are continuing on their path for their pre-determined outcome based on flawed and mis-represented data, so why should we expect to believe what issues were raised in their secretive, cloak and dagger closed meetings”, said Mr. Gentle

“Tonight VEAC have once again demonstrated that they only care for those outside the study area by taking their consultation meeting across the border, but you can be assured that once again community people will turn up in force and want to be heard as one.”

“The Redgum communities are under threat and those whose livelihoods are threatened will continue to follow VEAC until they are given a fair hearing”, concluded Mr. Gentle

For further information call:

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