

MEDIA RELEASE



Victorian 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

16 July 2008

Environmentalists blown out of the Water in Catchment Debate

The environment movement's arguments have been blown out of the water in the debate over timber harvesting in Melbourne's water catchments.

A report from Department of Sustainability and Environment has found that stopping timber harvesting will not provide the water savings that the environment movement have claimed.

'The report backs up what timber communities have been saying since this debate began' said Mr Scott Gentle, Victorian State manger for the national grassroots organisation Timber Communities Australia.

'People who understand this industry know that timber harvesting in Victoria is sustainable and it is fantastic that there is independent data to back this up' said Mr Gentle.

The "Wood and Water project - Harvesting in State forests supplying water to Melbourne" is being undertaken to provide information for the Government to make important decisions about the sustainable management of the State Forests that supply water to Melbourne.

This project is being undertaken because there has been a long history of debate about the relative costs and benefits of wood production and water supply from the State forests supplying water to Melbourne.

The report states 'water yield is increasing due to the natural ageing of the forest within the catchments as much of the catchment forests regrew after the 1939 bushfires. This means that water yield will increase naturally even if there are no changes to the harvesting regimes'.

'The report also states that under current harvesting regimes there will be between a 27 to 40 giga litre increase in water yield as opposed to a maximum 16 GL increase if harvesting was stopped' said Mr Gentle.

'There are hundreds of families that depend on resource from the catchment to provide them with an income and given the findings from DSE it is ridiculous to suggest that timber harvesting be halted' said Mr Gentle.

Findings by the recent Government inquiry into bushfires also add support to having harvesting in the Catchments. The report found that the reduction of timber harvesting on public land has lead to a loss of local knowledge and expertise, heavy machinery and accessibility for vehicles and has had a negative impact on the ability of fire agencies to combat bushfires.

‘When you add this to the water report there is no logical reason to stop harvesting in catchments’ said Mr Gentle.

‘Environment groups have chosen to walk away from the table in the water and wood process and you have to wonder if it’s because their lies are unravelling’ said Mr Gentle. This is the same tactic the environment movement used in the Regional Forest Agreement process. That process showed that forests in Victoria in some instances tripled the world criteria for reservation requirements, were well protected and not being cut down to the last tree as the environment movement claimed’ said Mr Gentle.

‘It seems that whenever a process doesn’t deliver the desired result for the environment movement they cry foul’ said Mr Gentle.

‘Green lies have been blown out of the water and exposed for what they are. Its time they accepted that sustainable forestry is a benefit to the environment, instead of targeting legal operations in Victoria’s State forests they should be fighting real environmental issues such as the illegal destruction of rainforest overseas’ concluded Mr Gentle.

For Further information contact

Scott Gentle, Victorian State Manger, Timber Communities Australia – 0438 556 020