

MEDIA RELEASE



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REDGUM COMMUNITIES STUNNED BY VEAC ARROGANCE

Timber dependent communities along the Murray have been left stunned today after the release of the Victorian Environment Assessment Councils (VEAC) River Redgum Forest Investigation said Timber Communities Australia.

“The final recommendations are nothing short of arrogant and highlight VEAC’s lack of understanding for rural communities”, said Mr Scott Gentle Victorian State Manager of the national grassroots community organisation Timber Communities Australia.

“The impact on the regions unique timber industry will be a whopping 78% cut to the sustainable yield which is a result of approximately 90,000ha of state forest being converted to National Parks.”

“The economic contribution and the jobs dependent on the industry have been under valued which has been a long standing attribute of VEAC who have ignored the industry in past studies”, said Mr Gentle.

“VEAC continues their claims that tourism will be the saviour for many communities, like they did in the Otways and Box & Ironbark Forests, however they have ignored the fact that their past predictions of tourism increases have all been failures and the promised jobs have never eventuated”, said Mr Gentle.

In a time where rural communities are already feeling the pain, comments such as: *“The costs of the recommendations would be largely borne in the areas near where public land timber harvesting and grazing are focussed. The small communities of Cohuna, Koondrook, Nathalia and Picola are likely to be most sensitive to the effects of cessation of timber harvesting, as small towns have relatively little flexibility to accommodate change, particularly in the context of economic difficulties these areas have experienced in recent years”*, are a slap in the face for country people.

“VEAC knows there will be pain and recognises that the pain will be felt hardest within the rural communities whereas the benefits will be in the larger city centres but they simply do not care”.

“TCA believes all factors; environmental, social and economic need to be considered equally, but this report flies in the face of balance and is more like a VNPA or Wilderness Society wish list rather than a so called independent report”, said Mr Gentle.

“TCA calls on the Government to dismiss the entire report, to sack VEAC Councillors and disband this pseudo green organisation and asks the Government to take a common sense approach that takes into account rural families and their dependent communities”, concluded Mr Gentle.

Ends

For further information; call Mr Scott Gentle, Victorian State Manager of TCA – 0438 556 020