

MEDIA RELEASE



South East Regional Office
79 Temple Street
(PO Box 421)
Heyfield Vic 3858
Ph: (03) 5148 2022
Fx: (03) 5148 2044
trevor.brown@tca.org.au
ABN. 33 008 665 736

1 September 2010

HOW WHITE COLLAR LABOR HAS DECIMATED BLUE COLLAR FORESTRY

A report commissioned by Timber Communities Australia (TCA) and prepared by CPI Strategic has highlighted the consequences of decisions made by Melbourne-centric state governments that have severely impacted on the timber industry and its dependent communities.

TCA South East Regional Coordinator, Trevor Brown, said state government decisions over the past 30 years had significantly reduced timber harvesting in Victoria.

“These decisions have directly and indirectly resulted in the closure of at least 93 mills,” he said.

“With these closures came the loss of around 2500 mill jobs and many more in businesses that rely on the timber industry.

“These mill closures have been caused by decisions made in Melbourne by university educated Ministers and Premiers, who are advised by a white-collar bureaucracy that do not understand or want to understand the situation of timber workers.”

According to the TCA commissioned report, there have been two major periods of timber industry contractions in 1986-87 and 2002 both caused by major reductions in the accessibility of harvestable timber caused by state Labor government decisions.

“What this report shows is that city-based, white collar, university educated Labor politicians have reduced the amount of timber that can be harvested, causing the number of mills in Victoria to shrink by almost two thirds,” Mr Brown said.

“In some regions, such as the East Gippsland Forest Management Area, in which the timber industry directly and indirectly supports about half of all fulltime jobs, an attack on the industry by the government can be catastrophic.”

Mr Brown said the TCA was concerned environmental groups were using Ministers’ lack of familiarity with the industry and its workers situations to further reduce the amount of timber available to continue a sustainable industry.

“In the lead up to the November 2010 state poll, the Wilderness Society and other environmental groups have been running a campaign to persuade the state government to impose a total ban on timber harvesting in Melbourne’s water catchment areas,” he said.

“We are worried that the government may be considering these demands.

“This is despite the fact that the Department of Sustainability and Environment confirms that no old growth forest is currently being harvested in Melbourne’s water catchments and that these operations have no significant impact on the quality or quantity of Melbourne’s water supply.

“The impact on jobs in both Melbourne and in rural areas if such a ban is enacted will be significant, though.

“It could threaten the future of seven mills and more than 450 mill jobs and affect the operations of another six mills and more their workforce of around 1500 jobs.

Supporting Real Jobs, Real People and Real Communities

“The impact on many of our communities could be devastating.

“This is something the Brumby government should seriously think about before giving into the demands to further reduce the amount of timber the industry can harvest.”

TCA is a national grassroots organisation that aims to secure long term access to natural resources to generate employment and a future for regional communities, and to ensure our unique Australian forests are scientifically evaluated and sustainably managed, for the benefit of future generations and genetic diversity.

ENDS

For further information, Trevor Brown, 0428 489 362