

TCA MEDIA RELEASE

Timber Industry too Valuable to East Gippsland

Timber Communities Australia (TCA) has come out in support of small communities in East Gippsland following extraordinary comments made by The Greens upper house candidate for Eastern Victoria, Samantha Dunn.

“Samantha Dunn’s comments demonstrate The Greens have an ideological opposition to forestry, but no real understanding of the communities of East Gippsland and the native timber industry,” claimed TCA’s Trevor Brown.

This was said in response to comments made by Ms Dunn on ABC Gippsland’s Rural Report on Wednesday 20 October.

In acknowledging that the East Gippsland industry is based on native hardwood forests rather than The Greens preferred plantation timbers Ms Dunn stated “In East Gippsland it certainly comes with its challenges I think if there are people there who want to remain in the logging industry then clearly they are going to have to go to where the plantation timber is and it’s really in western Victoria.”

Mr Brown said these ill-conceived, inconsiderate comments are what the community has come to expect from Greens candidates.

“A survey by the TCA recently identified 619 full time equivalent timber industry jobs in East Gippsland Shire,” he said.

When two industry support jobs are factored in, this means 1238 jobs in East Gippsland are supported by the forestry industry.”

With families included, it is not unreasonable to suggest that around 4,000 people in East Gippsland derive their income from the industry.”

“Does Ms Dunn honestly expect to win a seat in Parliament on a policy that would require almost 10% of East Gippsland Shire’s population to lose their income?

“Or, worse still, if those people followed Ms Dunn’s advice and moved out it would decimate the small communities throughout the region. Any loss of timber jobs, even in a larger centre like Orbost, would be enough to force a number of businesses to close their doors.”

Ms Dunn’s comments were in relation to comments by Cann River sawmiller, Bob Humphreys, on the fears the industry held for the upcoming Victorian elections.

“Only 16% of the East Gippsland and Tambo forest management areas are available for timber harvesting on an 80-year rotational basis,” Mr Brown said.

“79.3% of the entire area is public land, the greater proportion is now National Parks yet the output from East Gippsland sawlog and export wood chip products is \$106 million per annum.

“No other industry in the region produces so much income from so little. Changing a sign from “State Forest” to “National Park” will only rob communities of their real lifeblood” Mr Brown said.