

Media Release

20 June 2016

Keeping Forestry Sustainable in East Gippsland

VicForests has provided the community with more information about future timber supply to mills in East Gippsland after criticism last week.

Nathan Trushell, General Manager Stakeholders and Planning said timber resources available in the region have reduced substantially as a result of bushfires, increases to the reserve system and improvements in the way sustainable yields are determined.

“There is plenty of demand for unique, naturally grown native hardwood timber from East Gippsland.

“However, a limited resource base means there is simply not enough available timber at the moment to supply everyone who would like access,” he said.

“We went through a competitive sales process in 2013/14 to allocate future contracts for timber supply at a lower level as a result of the changes to the available resource.

“This process allowed all sawmills to compete on an even footing, regardless of their size.

“But unfortunately, the reduction in available timber resources means not all of our customers were successful in securing future contracts in this process,” Mr Trushell said.

“While we know reducing supply is a necessary response to the reduction in available resource, we are also particularly conscious of the impact this will have on the affected communities,” he said.

“We have tried to work with the mills affected to help them through this difficult period including adjusting supply levels to W & C in Buchan after a fire at the mill in late 2015 left them unable to process timber.

“We understand that many small, local sawmills are an essential part of their community and closing down can have a knock on effect on many people in the community, he said.

Mr Trushell said the demand for native grown timber has not decreased in the area.

“This is the constant challenge of responsible forest management, aligning demand with the available supply to make sure we’re balancing short and long term interests.

“We are confident that this process has set the industry on a sustainable footing going forward,” Mr Trushell said.

Long term projections indicate available timber resources in East Gippsland are likely to increase significantly in 20 – 30 years as areas of regrowth forests again become suitable for harvesting.