

Friday, May 1 2015

VicForests agrees to modify operations

As a result of community feedback, VicForests has agreed not to undertake a regeneration burn as part of its plans to regrow an area harvested in Toolangi.

Concerns has been raised by community members with the Minister for Environment, Water and Climate Change, Lisa Neville, about plans to burn the site.

Brad Winthrop, VicForests' General Manager, Operations, said the changes were made to plans following discussions between VicForests and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

"Every area is managed after harvest to ensure the forest returns and we were planning to burn this site today," Mr Winthrop said.

"Coupe burns are regularly used as part of the process as they help to create a suitable soil bed on the ground before Eucalypt seeds are spread across the area.

"The timing of this burn had been planned to take advantage of cooler conditions, making it easier to manage the fire and reducing any risk of impact on the trees which have been retained.

"However, we have consulted further with DELWP and agreed not to use a burn on this site.

"VicForests will use a method known as 'mechanical disturbance' to prepare the area. Mechanical disturbance pushes left over material into piles, exposing the soil underneath prior to seeding.

"These piles will be burnt at some point in the future once work has been completed," he said.

Mr Winthrop said the area was the first site harvested by VicForests using retention harvesting techniques with some members of the local community particularly interested in the outcomes.

"Retention harvesting protected a number of older trees on the site including a one hectare 'island' containing a group of large trees which was left unharvested to provide habitat and help species recolonise on the site more quickly," he said.

"After discussions with the community last year, another area on the site was also left unharvested to create a corridor of forest running beside the area harvested.

"The additional forest which has been protected as part of this operation will provide habitat for other native species.

"While the coupe is located within the Leadbeater's Possums range, the area underwent a detailed survey prior to harvesting which confirmed much of the site is made up tree species which are not the Possum's preferred habitat," Mr Winthrop said.