



## Jobs and forest industries

The RFA provides 20 years' certainty for range of industries supported by native forests in Gippsland, including forestry and wood products, tourism, mineral production, grazing and beekeeping.

### Timber production

#### Native forests

The hardwood sawmilling industry using wood from Gippsland directly generated about \$24.6 million in 1997-98 and contributed about \$46 million to the Victorian economy, taking flow-on effects into account. The pulpwood industry is also a major contributor to the region's hardwood industry.

The RFA will provide industry with 115,000 cubic metres of D+ sawlogs per year from the region (which excludes the western part of the Central Gippsland FMA). The necessary reduction in supply levels arising from new reserves and revised estimates of sustainable yield, will be phased in over two years. Further analyses of sustainable yield will be carried out in consultation with industry and community stakeholders as new data from Victoria's SFRI program becomes available.

Although the area available for timber harvesting will be reduced under the RFA, the certainty of resource supply, combined with financial assistance from both the Commonwealth and State governments, will ensure that there are no net job losses in the Gippsland region as a result of the RFA. It will encourage:

- Further increases in the proportion of timber that is kiln-dried and processed into value-added products;
- Increased processing of residual logs;
- Networks between timber processors to facilitate investment;
- Strengthening links with the furniture industry; and
- Identifying and expanding markets for Gippsland timbers.

#### **Victorian Forest Industry Structural Adjustment Package (VicFISAP)**

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have jointly provided \$15 million for Vic FISAP, bringing total funding for Vic FISAP to \$42.6 million, to assist the continued development of Victoria's hardwood timber industry and any adjustment arising from the Regional Forest Agreement process. VicFISAP assists industries to take advantage of new opportunities, to increase value adding and downstream processing, to set up new equipment and technology and expand local manufacturing.

Additional funding of \$20 million to assist timber industry and regional development will be provided by the Victorian government. Initiatives include:

- increasing forest productivity through thinning regrowth forest stands;
- stand improvement projects aimed at reducing competition in established regrowth stands;
- enhanced forest resource information including an acceleration of the SFRI program;
- assistance for local government in implementing the *Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production* on private land.

## **Plantations**

Gippsland contains about 85,700 ha of plantations. Plantations supplied 450,000 cubic metres of sawlogs and 615,000 cubic metres of pulpwood to industry in 1997-98. The RFA provides for native forest industries to complement the region's increasing plantation estate.

The RFA recognises the future potential of plantations and the need to facilitate expansion of the estates and product diversification, including sawlogs. The Governments will provide additional funding for the continuation of Regional Plantation Committees to guide this development.

Initiatives aimed at enhancing plantation development include:

- additional funding for plantation development;
- socio-economic assessment of plantation development;
- additional funding for development of farm plans integrating plantations and other farming enterprises; and
- funding to assist implementation of effluent-irrigated plantations.

## **Tourism**

The forests, rivers, lakes and ranges of the Gippsland region provide a wealth of natural attractions, including two of Victoria's most popular tourist destinations – Wilsons Promontory National Park and the Gippsland Lakes. Tourism makes a significant economic contribution to many local centres, with visitors spending around \$69 million annually in the Gippsland Natural Discovery region.

The RFA provides the tourism industry with the certainty to plan ahead and use the natural and cultural assets of the additional reserves.

The initiatives aimed at regional tourism development include:

- Regional tourism development studies in East Gippsland; and
- Extending the Bruthen to Bairnsdale Rail Trail through to Orbost.

## **Other forest Industries**

Under the RFA, the forests of Gippsland will continue to supply a range of products and benefits including forest produce such as posts and poles, other hewn timber, firewood, and specialty timbers as well as apiculture, prospecting, mining and water values. Grazing of domestic stock also occurs on public land throughout Gippsland. A three-year phase out of firewood harvesting in new reserves has been agreed to assist regional communities in adjusting to new sources of firewood. Victoria will provide assistance to develop a statewide strategy for firewood and assistance for development of firewood plantations.

### **Minerals**

Mineral exploration and mining will be permitted in certain parts of the CAR Reserve system but only where the identified conservation values are not incompatible with exploration and mining. Consistent with previous Victorian RFAs, mineral exploration and mining in the reserve system will be subject to the normal Victorian legislative controls. Mine rehabilitation will also be subject to Victorian legislation and will aim to achieve world best practice.

### **Apiculture**

Apiarists use the region's forests to produce honey, beeswax, pollen and royal jelly. Crop pollination is another important benefit of apiculture. Consideration has been given to the importance to apiarists of areas like the Colquhoun forest and areas have been excluded from timber harvesting while providing continued access for beekeeping. Access to public land for beekeeping will continue under existing State policies and plans, and beekeeping is generally permitted in State forest Special Protection Zones.