

Media Release

23 November 2016

Sustainable Operations Support Local Jobs

The Strathbogrie State Forest has been providing local employment to residents for over 100 years.

Mr Ron Jones, retired Strathbogrie resident, harvested here for timber around 50 years ago and today his grandson Richard is able to harvest that same area.

Rob Kirley, owner of RJ Kirley Transport in Mansfield, has been contracted by VicForests to complete the current harvesting operation.

"I employ three full-time staff and have taken on an additional four staff for the duration of this operation," Mr Kirley said.

"The work we do is completely sustainable. The area being harvested in this region is only 0.1% of the total Strathbogries forest," he said.

Mr Kirley explained that firewood is an important commodity in the area as many people rely on it for heating where they do not have access to gas or electric heating.

"We have recently expanded our operation to enable the processing of the lower quality logs for firewood for the north east region.

"We have also purchased land and built a storage shed for firewood and sawn timber," Mr Kirley said.

The VicForests operation is in 27 hectares of the Strathbogries State Forest which covers a total area of approximately 27 000 hectares, 9 000 of which is currently suitable for timber harvesting.

"We're leaving behind more trees than we take, so in another 25 to 40 years you'll be able to come back and do the same. It's a renewable resource that keeps on growing.

"The trees we choose to leave behind are the best available habitat trees for now and in the future," he said.

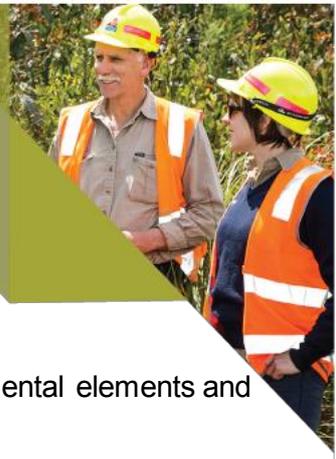
Mr Kirley said that the small impact that timber harvesting has on this forest produces noticeable benefits for local employment and supplies local businesses that depend on this industry for their livelihoods.

"I am a third generation timber industry worker who has relied on this work for more than 35 years and my family's involvement dates back as far as 70 years", he said.

Lachlan Spencer, General Manager Planning VicForests said that VicForests role is to find a balance between environmental conservation and supplying their contractual obligations.

"There is a high demand for sustainable hardwood timber products in Victoria", Mr Spencer said.

"We need to be able to depend more on local, sustainably managed forests for supplying our timber demands rather than relying on imports.



Media Release

“We conduct all our operations in a sustainable way, assessing each area for environmental elements and regrowing each area following operations.

“Each tree produces a range of different products with the highest quality hardwood timber from these operations going into furniture, flooring and construction supplies and the lower quality timber being used for paper products, firewood and woodchips,” he said.

VicForests is certified to the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS), which is aligned to the global Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) - the world's largest forest certification scheme.

-ends-