



TIMBER TOWNS VICTORIA

A Local Government Association

2023 Federal Government Agriculture, land and emissions discussion paper

Timber Towns Victoria welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the 2023 Federal Government Agriculture, land and emissions discussion paper.

Timber Towns Victoria (TTV) is an incorporated Victorian Local Government Association, representing the interests of municipal councils in relation to forestry on both public and private land. The Association's primary function is to provide a forum for local government to address the management of forests and forest industries and their impact on local communities.

TTV is an effective advocacy body that represents many towns and cities across Victoria. Our effectiveness is based on being a peak organisation and acting as a voice for these communities advocating to both the Federal and Victorian State Government on policy and legislation that impacts the timber industry.

There are several opportunities within the timber industry where we can look at reducing emissions and building carbon stores.

Native Forestry - Continued native forest harvesting is regenerative, viable and as with all timber and timber products will continue to store carbon for the life of the timber and products. As we harvest and replace the harvested trees with more, we are continually growing the capacity to store more carbon. The introduction of bans on the harvesting of native timber by State Governments in Western Australia and Victoria is a major barrier to the native forestry industry achieving these goals on a national level. A selective native timber harvesting approach within Western Australia and Victoria at a minimum would improve carbon storing capabilities with regrowth in harvested areas.

Farm Forestry - Encouraging farmers to look for opportunities to plant the right tree in the right place for wind breaks, soil conditioning, and an alternative investment for farmers. making a farm more efficient and effective. It can be done well with the right knowledge and resources. Jigsaw Farms is an excellent example of 3,378 hectares of mixed farming integrating forestry, carbon and indigenous plantings with high productivity grazing on a large scale. Smaller scale operations could also be achieved in the combined effort.

Transport – The opportunity transition to alternative fuels that are emission reducing has moved past the horizon and are here on our doorstep. For example, earlier this year a forestry company launched the use of an electric truck to transport logs across the Green Triangle Forestry region in Victoria and South Australia. The current challenge the industry faces is that our high emissions are created from use of heavy equipment and trucks required to transport timber. Electrifying them is a real challenge. The government will need

| PO Box 152, Portland Vic 3305 | Phone: 0428 891 728 |
| Email: secretary@timbertownsvictoria.com.au | Website: www.timbertownsvictoria.com.au |



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to work with the trucking industry over time for a slow transition to alternative fuels and electric equipment and trucks. There are transport companies in Victoria currently exploring hydrogen as a long haul transport fuel.

Plantations – Planting the right tree in the right place to gain maximum use of that tree and carbon storage. Our current major challenge right now is that plantations are shrinking and need to be addressed urgently. Although a shorter rotation is viable for export pulp, native timber plantations require a 60-year rotation to get the best quality required for high value and high-quality products. The price of land is high and investment in plantations does not look appealing. The industry needs the Government to step in and help get trees in the ground.

Residuals / Residues – The building and construction industry are already using high strength laminated timber which is made of multiple layers of wood and other material, has fewer natural defects and is comparable to steel in strength but is much lighter. Mills are good at making the timber residues into bioenergy. The wood residues that are left in the forest after harvesting could be used to convert to biofuels for other industries. Ensuring a greater recovery of residues from harvesting presents viable outcomes to create residual products like woodchips, bark, and sawdust, do find local uses in some cases, contributing to animal care and regional hospital energy generation.

Progression of reduction efforts whilst also building resilience and climate change adaption.

For all of this to happen, there needs to be incentives as well as education with communities to diversify economic activities. Communities should place greater value on land management activities and the interface between land-use and manufacturing, including food production, packaging, and transport services, to create a more diversified economic base.

Land holders and the timber industry should focus on including plantation forestry, either broadacre or integrated with other farm activities (farm forestry or agroforestry). Plantations can serve as a source of income from solid wood like timber building materials or environmental services income, including carbon credits.

To encourage the expansion of plantation forestry solutions, legislation and regulations should ensure that plantation resources are maintained and utilised for various outcomes, such as production of solid wood, pulpwood, and carbon farming.

Ensure 'as of right' access to existing and future plantations, their harvesting, and extraction of timber, with the option of replanting when commercially viable.

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Initiatives or programs to be applied or expanded to a national scale.

Communities should be supported by comprehensive and ongoing state-funded programs for effective fire risk management and firefighting capabilities. This is especially vital due to the cessation of native timber harvesting in Victoria and Western Australia, where these timber towns and communities will lose their primary firefighting capability, the industry's workforce and its equipment, knowledge, and commitment. Climate change and other factors are driving more frequent and potent bushfires that can catastrophically release carbon stores into the atmosphere and cause great harm to many communities. Early detection and suppression activities need significant investment and resourcing.

Support Farm Forestry and Agro-Forestry Initiatives by encouraging and accelerating farm forestry and agro-forestry initiatives where they already exist, as growing trees on farms and processing them locally can diversify income, employment, and wealth generation while promoting land management and regeneration.

Supporting the construction and forest products industries with regulated and sustainable locally home grown timber reduces Australia's carbon footprint by reducing timber imports that leave a much larger carbon footprint, and in some cases are not sustainably harvested.

Bringing together existing efforts and new initiatives and supporting and enabling change.

The Australian Government needs to provide incentives and support industry to transition changes within their sectors for the points previously discussed, that will net everyone together in the effort to reduce emissions and fight climate change.

The bond between timber communities and their forests is profound. The inhabitants nurture their forests, valuing them for the social, conservation, and recreational benefits they offer. In return, these forests enhance residents' physical and mental well-being, reinforcing this essential connection between timber towns and their forests.

Yours sincerely

CR KAREN STEPHENS
President

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