

## Bega Valley Climate Resilience Strategy

### Feedback on forest issues from Harriett Swift

#### General

1. The woodchipping industry is the Adani of the Bega Valley Shire. Emissions from destroyed and damaged forests<sup>1</sup> dwarf all other emissions from the region combined. Protecting mature, multi-aged and regenerating forests is the quickest, cheapest and easiest way to make a significant contribution to tackling climate change.
2. The logging industry argues that, as an industry, it is carbon positive, but this is a highly fanciful claim. It is based on an assumption that forest carbon remains stored for decades or longer in durable timber products, such as furniture and ignores soil carbon lost because of logging and emissions from post logging burns. In the case of the South Coast industry over 90% of timber felled goes to woodchips for paper, which typically within 3 years becomes carbon dioxide. Even 'solid' timber products such as pallets have a very short life before going to landfill, mulching or burning. The number of times they are reused is very limited.
3. Forests can also have a significant positive impact on local climatic conditions<sup>2</sup>, including rainfall.
4. Council has little direct control over forest management, but can be a powerful advocate. It can also make sure that Council services such as road provision and maintenance do not become proxy subsidies to the industry.
5. While it may have no choice about the multi-million dollar subsidy it is forced by the State Government to provide to the Forestry Corporation as an exemption from Local Government rates, it can strongly advocate to have this changed.
6. It is important not to conflate native forestry and agriculture. Many Government agencies group them together, but it is not a form of agriculture. Many provisions and/ or recommendations relating to agriculture are not appropriate to forestry. The report appears not to do this, but it should be made explicit.
7. A particular issue in the Bega Valley and other shires with large forested areas is the bush fire hazard posed by power lines going through forest and bush. It is high time that power companies followed the lead of Horizon Energy in WA which has recently<sup>3</sup> begun supporting some of its customers to go completely off-grid. Power lines cause bush fires, as they did at Reedy Swamp/ Tathra in 2018 and Cobargo this year.

#### Feedback on specific items

1. Page 4, Table 1: "Performance Measures and Targets by 2050" for "Catchments and Forests" includes nothing on forests. There should be targets for public and private forests and urban trees.
2. In the same table, against "Aquaculture, Fishing and Forestry" it states: *Increase in value of timber production* This is at best ambiguous and could imply many outcomes which would be very bad and inappropriate for forests, such as increased woodchip production. Value to whom? It could be simply suggesting more profits to the logging industry or more widespread logging. This target should be deleted, but if it remains, the wording should

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.chipstop.savetheforests.org.au/chipmill%20calculation%20flyer.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2018-09-15/trees-make-rain-ease-drought/10236572>

<sup>3</sup> <https://horizonpower.com.au/our-community/news-events/news/horizon-power-delivers-australia-s-first-off-grid-renewable-solution/>

make it clear that “value” includes environmental, carbon sequestration and recreational values.

3. Page 44, Table 11 – Contribution of natural assets to climate resilience. This lists *Carbon sequestration, localised temperature moderation* against “Additional Climate Resilience Value” The value of forests in maintaining rainfall should also be recognised here.
4. Page 53. Included in the list of “Climate Resilience Benefits” are: *Carbon assimilation Forests could be managed to maximise Carbon storage and sequestration potential* and *Forest industry sustainability*. It should be recognised that carbon benefits are greatest when mature, standing forests are left to sequester carbon. Planting new trees is good, but a much less effective way to remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. *Forest industry sustainability* is ambiguous. In this context it appears to mean that the forest industry will have a longer life span rather than become environmentally sustainable. I would suggest that should be amended to: “Healthier and longer-lived forests which can play a more substantial role in carbon sequestration.”
5. Page 56, under Climate Resilience Actions is: *Review active management requirements of regrowth forests within National Park Estate or State Forests Flora Reserves to improve biodiversity, catchment management and bushfire resilience*. I strongly support this, but would add: that retaining and improving koala habitat in the Murrah Flora Reserves should be a particular focus. Likewise, *Establish carbon sequestration study of forest and rural landscapes across the Shire to in-form long term management of these areas*. This is good, but must have independent control.
6. Page 57, the forestry industry is referred to under *climate resilience challenges*. It should be recognised that flammability and bush fire hazard is greater in a logged, regrowth forest (denser, drier and of uniform age and crown height) than an older moist forest. This has been widely recognised by scientific experts<sup>4</sup>, especially since the Victorian Black Saturday fires of February 2009.
7. Page 81, states:

The State Forest Estate encompasses 1300km<sup>2</sup> and is focused in the southern part of the Shire. The majority of this area is dedicated timber production of pulpwood, hardwood logs and softwood plantations in the Towamba Valley. The timber industry is a significant employer within the Eden area, with direct employment forest management, harvesting, manufacturing and export.

This overstates the economic contribution of the timber industry. It is highly capital intensive, requiring \$5m of investment to support one job. The total employment is less than 1% of the total workforce in the BV Shire.
8. Page 83 lists Climate Resilience Projects / Programs *Develop high value timber products and other postharvest locally based value adding and manufacturing*. It should be made clear that these must use plantation not native forest wood.

Also, *Work with industry to examine reforestation potential of low value agricultural land for silviculture and carbon offsetting sites*. I support this.

It should be made very clear that all of these reforestation and related projects such as biochar relate to plantation wood ONLY. Native forest must not be used.
9. Page 94, the reference to a “pulp mill” in the Eden case study appears to be an error. There was once a pulp mill proposed to be built to process Eden woodchips, but this was never built.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://theconversation.com/victorias-logged-landscapes-are-at-increased-risk-of-bushfire-30611>