



TIMBER TOWNS VICTORIA  
A Local Government Association

# Timber Towns Victoria Submission to the Department of Sustainability and Environment Discussion Paper: Sustainable Water Strategy Central Region

December 2005

## Introduction

Timber Towns Victoria (TTV) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Department of Sustainability and Environment's (DSE) Discussion Paper for the Central Region's Sustainable Water Strategy.

TTV is the peak body for Victorian local government on forestry policy and development. It is an incorporated local government association representing the interests of municipal councils in relation to forestry on both public and private land. Established in 1985 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 government operations and the community. As such the focus of this submission is on issues relating to timber production and land use changes.

Timber Towns Victoria agrees that as a society we need to change the way we manage and consume water in Australia. This valuable resource must be managed sustainably for present and future generations. TTV also believes the environment should share in the benefits that can be achieved through water reform, however, recognising that water reform must not occur in isolation, that it must consider government strategies and commitments in other relevant policy areas. The Association is concerned how the Strategy will integrate with other government policies on public and private forestry and plantation development.

On other issues of relevance to the local government sector, the Association supports the Municipal Association of Victoria's submission.

## Land Use Changes

Timber Towns Victoria acknowledges that non-strategic expansion of plantations and resultant changes in land use can have significant impacts on the environment and water resources. However, it is believed that properly planned plantations can provide many benefits to the environment and the community. Research undertaken by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) has shown that properly located plantations have little impact on water flows and that plantations can contribute to solving environmental problems such as salinity, greenhouse gas sequestration and water quality (CSIRO 2004).

TTV supports work currently being undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries and would welcome the development of tools for managing the impact of new plantations on water resources, as well as the introduction of mechanisms that would discourage the establishment of plantations in areas where such a development would have an adverse affect on water resources. The Association believes the development of any such mechanism would require extensive consultation with local government to determine appropriate roles and responsibilities as well as resourcing.

## Harvesting in State Forests

Timber Towns Victoria feels that Victoria's state forests are currently managed sustainably under initiatives outlined in *Our Forest, Our Future* and Regional Forest Agreements. State forests are being harvested at an average rate of one per cent per year. Harvesting operations in these areas are localised and dispersed across the landscape and occur on an 80-100 year cycle. These factors significantly reduce the effects that harvesting in state forests has on water availability.



The Association is aware that discrepancies exist on whether timber harvesting has a significant effect on water quantity, as such TTV supports, in principle, work currently being undertaken by DSE in refining estimates of the affect of logging on water yield in water catchments and in assessing the feasibility of establishing plantations outside state forests to offset reductions in timber availability.

The augmentation options listed in the Strategy on logging in water supply catchments (table 4.6) poses the following questions:

- How significant will the water savings be from reduced logging in water supply catchments and how will these savings compare to savings that can come from water efficiency? TTV acknowledges that this information won't be available until the DSE studies are completed.
- Should the focus of water conservation effort be in other areas?
- Where will the timber resource come from if logging is phased out in catchments?
- Will the assessments acknowledge the benefit to community/environment of state forest logging?
- What will be the socio-economic impacts on rural and regional industry?

The Association feels that the strategy should not move forward on these issues until the DSE investigations are completed.

### **Incorporation of DSE and DPI Research**

Timber Towns Victoria is concerned that the strategy will be adopted by government before these studies into the impacts of private and public forestry are completed. As such, the Association is keen to understand how the issue of public and private forestry will be dealt with in the draft and final reports, i.e. how will the findings of these studies feed into decision-making processes? TTV would not like to see the Government pursue policies in this area until the research is completed. The investigations by DSE and DPI should inform any policy or strategy on water management and it is important that the central region water strategy does not preempt the findings of the DSE/DPI studies.

### **Conclusion**

Timber Towns Victoria agrees it is important to develop a long-term strategy to address the sustainable management of Central Region's water supply. The Association is supportive of a number of the measures proposed in the Discussion Paper including investigations on private and public forestry impacts on water resources, however, recommends that these investigation be completed and communicated to the public before the addressing these issues. TTV also recommends that the focus of water conservation efforts should be on consumption efficiency measures and integrated management rather than on private and public forestry.

Any measures to be embodied in a long-term water strategy need to consider all associated impacts (both positive and negative) to ensure the sustainable management of water supplies and environment for present and future generations, and must not disregard rural and regional towns that rely on timber the industry.

Timber Towns Victoria looks forward to working with government to develop a community supported strategy for water supply in the Central Region.

### **Contact**

For further information on any issues raised in this submission please contact: Kellie Kendrick, TTV Executive Officer, 9667 5582, [kkendrick@mav.asn.au](mailto:kkendrick@mav.asn.au)

### **References**

CSIRO (2004) Maximising the benefits of new tree plantations in Australia. CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products and CSIRO Land and Water. [www.ffp.csiro.au/downloads/FFP-LW19052004Summary.pdf](http://www.ffp.csiro.au/downloads/FFP-LW19052004Summary.pdf)

