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COUNCIL TAKES A FIRM STANCE ON STRATHBOGIE STATE FOREST

Strathbogieshire Council has endorsed support for an end to logging and better protection of the Strathbogies State Forest.

Council moved the following motion at its recent Ordinary Meeting:

That Council:

1. Call on the Victorian State Government to cease native timber harvesting activities in the Strathbogies Forest.
2. Call on the Victorian Government to accelerate the transition from native timber harvesting in Victoria, to plantation-based timber supply with changes to taxation incentives, and advocacy to the Federal Government for changes to regulations to give plantation timber better access to carbon farming schemes.
3. Support the establishment of a protected conservation area under the National Parks Act 1975, encompassing all of the existing Strathbogies State Forest and associated public land.
4. Promote the economic future of the Strathbogies Forest as focussed on nature-based tourism and recreational activities and work with local groups and regional tourism bodies to achieve this.
5. Notify the Victorian Government Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Environment, as well as Local, State and Federal Members, of this resolution.

Council is aware of community concern about logging of native timber in the Strathbogies State Forest.

The forest once comprised over 100,000 ha of dense native forest cover. In the last 150 years land clearing and the establishment of significant softwood (pine) plantations has reduced the remnant forest to 24,000 ha.

This smaller area has become the last intact refuge for hundreds of forest-dependent species in the Strathbogies Ranges.

Logging and climate change are continuing to exert pressure on this last remaining habitat area.

With harvesting and milling operations no longer being based in the shire, little, if any, commercial value is generated in the Strathbogies Shire from logging operations.

It is Council's view that the future of the Strathbogies Forest should be based on tourism and recreational activity and forestry operations in the existing softwood plantations.

Council also believes that there is significant potential for mixed species hardwood plantations to be developed (farm forestry).

Council is calling on the Victorian and Federal Governments to support these goals by creating a conservation area over the existing native forested area and developing policies to enhance the viability of farm forestry activity.

Mount Wombat Ward Councillor Alistair Thomson said it was important for Council to take a stand on the matter.

“We cannot stand back and risk the extinction of species like the Greater Glider for an activity that produces no net benefit for residents,” Cr Thomson explained.

“Society needs hardwood. This need should be met by mixed species plantation forests that produce income for landowners and employment for those who will maintain these private forests.”

“A conserved Strathbogie Forest can continue to be enjoyed for recreational activities by residents and opens up the opportunity for ecotourism activity,” Cr Thomson said.

Strathbogie Shire Mayor Amanda McClaren said Council believes the resolution is in the best interest of the Strathbogie State Forest and the residents of the shire.

“Protection of the Strathbogie State Forest has the potential to have a significant positive effect on our shire’s local tourism economy, local and state climate future, and provides the opportunity for meaningful reconnection with regional aboriginal culture, discourse and heritage,” Cr McClaren explained.

-ENDS-

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