

Wednesday, 13 October 2021

POWERING UP NEW JOBS IN OUR FORESTRY TRANSITION

Gippsland businesses are leading by example as they look at new ways to transition away from native forest harvesting and become more innovative and sustainable.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas today announced that Spiegel Energy in partnership with Radial Timber and the Yarram Community Energy Group have received \$2 million from the Victorian Government through its Forestry Plan to establish a renewable energy park at the Radial Timber mill.

The energy park is expected to create five full-time roles and turn Radial Timber into a fully closed loop site. It will turn waste from the mill's operations into energy and heat, creating new revenue streams with excess energy running into the local electricity grid.

The bioenergy cell will utilise the wood chips and shavings from current timber production to provide at least 30 per cent of the electricity and heat needs of the company, as well as generating multiple bioproducts. It is estimated this will save Radial Timbers about \$24,000 in energy costs annually.

The renewable energy park is an example of how businesses are embracing innovation to transition towards a plantation-based timber supply and different markets. Two communities in Wellington Shire – Yarram and Heyfield – have now received \$2.7 million to look at new ways to transition and support new energy projects.

Yarram and Heyfield are the first recipients of the Victorian Forestry Plan's *Local Development Strategy* grants following a successful pilot in East Gippsland. They will each receive \$360,000 to be administered by the Wellington Shire Council.

The funding will help to employ two independent project officers to support the communities in shaping future industry and local jobs. They will undertake analysis in each community to identify the town's strengths, assets, challenges and opportunities for innovation and economic development.

The grant program is designed to be community-led and reflect local ambitions, building on the work of the Latrobe Valley Authority.

The *Local Development Strategy* grants are a key part of the Victorian Forestry Plan, ensuring communities are well supported through the transition. For more information visit vic.gov.au/forestry.

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"These projects put Gippsland communities at the centre of planning for their future. We are supporting businesses to develop new ways of working with new sources of supply, while retaining local jobs."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Jane Garrett

"Our businesses are at the forefront when it comes to innovation and this shows that they are continually looking for new ideas as we transition towards a plantation-based timber supply."

Quote attributable to the Chairman of Spiegel Energy John Ballis

"We are excited to be part of this innovative circular economy project, bringing innovation and sustainability to reality through a bioenergy cell which is deployable, scalable and replicable throughout Gippsland."

Quote attributable to Wellington Shire Council Mayor Cr Garry Stephens

"This is a great example of the community and local businesses working with different levels of government to deliver a good outcome for all involved."

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