



Socio-economic impacts of land use change in the Green Triangle and Central Victoria

MEDIA RELEASE

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New report documents community views on living with land use change

A new research report, released today, documents the perceptions of 57 residents living in South Australia and Victoria about how land use change has affected their lives and the communities they live in.

The report, *Living with land use change: different views and perspectives*, is the first in a series of seven publications to be released from the *Socio-economic impacts of land use change* research project, studying a region extending from Robe in South Australia to Colac in Victoria. The project is funded by 11 organisations with an interest in land use change, and guided by an advisory group of residents from the study region.

“Land use changes provoke ongoing debate and sometimes conflict amongst residents of the region.” said Dr Jacki Schirmer (Australian National University), Project Leader.

“Sometimes those interviewed for this report had widely differing views about the impacts of a particular land use change. In this report we identify the range of ways people experience land use change, and how these may vary from person to person.”

A wide range of land use changes were identified by the people interviewed for this report. The changes considered most important or significant were increases in the area of blue gum plantations, growth in the area and intensity of cropping, growth in dairy farming in some parts of the region and decline in others, changes in water use, increased farm amalgamation, and growth in rural residential properties.

The report finds that different land use changes were believed to have different impacts, and people don't always agree about what those impacts are. For example:

- Expansion of blue gum plantations, expansion of cropping and farm amalgamation are commonly – but not always – believed to be associated with decreases in rural population. There are more divergent opinions on their impacts on local and regional economic activity, with a number of possible impacts described.
- Expansion of dairy farming is commonly believed to increase local employment and economic activity.
- Expansion of rural residential properties is associated with bringing new people into the region, but with varying impacts, which largely depend on how well new

residents integrate into the community. Some participants had positive and some negative experiences of "seachangers" or "treechangers".

The report details these and many more views about the impacts of different types of land use change.

The report finds that land use change often involves more than a simple change in the area of land used for a particular purpose. Instead, it often involves changes in the efficiency and intensity of production.

"This range of types of change is important to recognise," said Dr Schirmer.

"A change in intensity or efficiency of land use can have socioeconomic consequences that are as significant as those resulting from a change in the total area of land being managed for a particular land use," she said.

"This report, and those that follow in coming months from the project, will give community, government and industry decision-makers valuable information when dealing with issues relating to land use change" said Cr Karen Stephens (Glenelg Shire Council), Chair of the Advisory Group and Steering Committee.

'The report being released today raises many questions about the impacts of land use change, which are being examined in subsequent parts of the study,' she said.

These perceptions are currently being examined further through a quantitative survey of over 1000 people living in the region. Analysis of other statistics on land use and socio-economic change are also being studied as part of the project.

Copies of the *Living with land use change: different views and perspectives* report can be downloaded from the project website at www.landusechange.net.au.

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Reports coming soon:

Understanding resident views on land use change	May 2008
Impacts of land use change to farm forestry and plantation forestry: landholder survey results	June 2008
Employment and spending: comparing the activity generated by different primary industries	Sept 2008
Socio-economic impacts of land use change: what do the statistics tell us?	Sept 2008
Socio-economic impacts of land use change: Summary report & Integration report	Sept 2008

'Socio-economic impacts of land use change in the Green Triangle and Central Victoria' research project
Research providers: Australian National University, University of Melbourne, and Victorian Govt Department of Primary Industries.

The following organisations have contributed cash or in-kind funding to the project (in alphabetical order):
Central Victorian Farm Plantations, Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Forest and Wood Products Australia, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, Glenelg Shire Council, Green Triangle Regional Plantation Committee, Moyne Shire Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council, Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries, and Wattle Range Council.
This project is proudly hosted by the Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry