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MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMISSIONING OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT OF THE TIMBER INDUSTRY IN GIPPSLAND

The Executive Officer of Gippsland Private Forestry Inc.(GPF), Rob Willersdorf, has announced the appointment of consultants to undertake a socio-economic assessment of the timber industry in Gippsland. "This project is being commissioned jointly by GPF and the Department of Primary Industries to quantify the socio-economic influence of the timber industry and associated downstream industries to the Gippsland region. The appointed consultants are MBAC Consulting Pty Ltd, and their analysis will be the basis of a report that communicates the data collected to relevant stakeholders and the community."

GPF (formerly Gippsland Farm Plantations Inc.), is the regional Private Forestry Development Committee for Gippsland. It works with the State government and other stakeholders to promote sustainable, commercial private forestry development in Gippsland. "This project will collate information on both the public and private forest and plantation resources in the region, and track the ways these resources are used by the timber industry in the region and beyond" said Mr Willersdorf. "In doing so, we will gain a better understanding of the socio-economic influence of Gippsland's timber resources and the primary and secondary processing industries (both domestic and external) that draw upon these resources. This Gippsland project will complement similar work done recently in other regions of the State and extend upon an industry overview commissioned earlier this year by Latrobe City."

"For this project, the Gippsland region is deemed to include the 10 Local Government Authority areas of Mornington Peninsula, Casey, Yarra Ranges, Cardinia, Bass Coast, South Gippsland, Baw Baw, Latrobe, Wellington, and East Gippsland. Where possible, the study will express the various socio-economic parameters by Local government area as well as in aggregate for the Gippsland region.

"One aspect of the study that will be of particular interest to the Gippsland community is the component that describes the anticipated socio-economic implications of recent changes to resource supply levels from State forests in the region, along with estimates of the extra activity that would occur assuming realistic projections of an expansion of the region's plantation estate and the possible contribution of private native forest resources", said Mr Willersdorf. "Importantly, the project will also collate an understanding of the Gippsland community's attitudes towards the industry."

MBAC Consulting Director, Rod Meynink, said "The information collected by this project will allow all stakeholders to appreciate the impact of the industry in the face of increasing resource restrictions, offsetting plantation opportunities, as well as processing and market related challenges and opportunities." "Our project approach will be to conduct an industry census developed specifically for this project, and supplement this information with existing data where current and applicable, together with surveys or interviews conducted with a sample of the community.

Mr Meynink said the consultants were looking forward to engaging with a wide cross section of the resource and processing segments of the industry in Gippsland as they undertake the first stage of the project. "We then anticipate a significant input from Local government as we proceed with the social and economic analysis of the industry as well as their reflection of community attitudes and perceptions"

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Promoting sustainable, commercial private forestry development in Gippsland