



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

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Cropping, dairying and rural residential development viewed as largely positive, but plantations up for debate, says new study.**

A report released today offers new insights into the land use change debate, drawing upon the results of a survey of south-west Victorian and south-east South Australian residents.

The survey of more than one thousand residents showed that while most respondents considered cropping, dairying and rural residential development to be positive for the region, views on plantations were more diverse and more likely to be negative.

Dr Kathryn Williams, Senior Lecturer from the University of Melbourne and lead researcher on the project, says the report helps explain the sharp contrast in views on plantations and other land uses.

“Compared with other land uses, more people overall thought that increased blue gum plantations led to population loss, fewer jobs, lower levels of community involvement, more road damage and wildfire risk.”

The report also shows a trend that may be surprising to government and industry - that most participants considered the overall impact of rural residential development to be positive.

Dr Williams says the study found that people’s perceptions about the social benefits of land uses are a key factor influencing their overall beliefs about each land use.

“While many respondents expressed concern about the impacts of increased rural residential development on water availability and road conditions, most also saw benefits for the rural population, employment and business - this may be why they believe rural residential development was positive overall for the region.”

Dr Williams says the diversity of views on all land uses, but especially plantations, was striking.

“People expressed wide-ranging views on the social impacts of all land uses, which is not surprising since there is very little independent information about what these impacts actually might be.”

Glenelg Shire Councillor and Project Chair Karen Stephens said the findings provide a more representative picture of community views than those which have been available in the past.

“Having a better understanding about why residents hold these views will help with government and industry policy and communication,” Cr Stephens said.

“The significance of these findings will become even clearer later this year when the project compares community perceptions with independent data on social and economic impacts of change in the region.”

Residents’ views on land uses were examined with two surveys involving 1,313 people living in the study region, which extends from Robe in South Australia to Colac in Victoria, and from Horsham to the coast (the Green Triangle and Central Victoria regions).

Copies of the report are available for download at [www.landusechange.net.au](http://www.landusechange.net.au)

The survey is part of a larger study of the socio-economic impacts of land use change in the Green Triangle and Central Victoria. The survey of residents is conducted by The University of Melbourne. Other components of the larger project are being undertaken by Australian National University and Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries. The following organisations are contributing 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 Research and Development Corporation, Glenelg Shire Council, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, Green Triangle Regional Plantation Committee, Moyne Shire Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council, Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries, and Wattle Range Council.

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**Project website:**  
[www.landusechange.net.au](http://www.landusechange.net.au)

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