

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



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HELPING FORESTRY COMMUNITIES PLAN FOR TRANSITION

The Andrews Labor Government is backing communities to transition away from native timber harvesting, with targeted funding to develop new economic strategies and job opportunities.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas announced a \$360,000 Local Development Strategy grant for the Noojee community in Gippsland.

The funding will be used to recruit an independent project officer to develop a strategy with locals to support the town's economic diversification when native timber harvesting ends in 2030.

Located at the foot of Mount Baw Baw, Noojee is becoming an increasingly popular destination for tree changers offering an urban meets bush lifestyle close to the regional and suburban centres of Warragul and Pakenham.

An independent project officer will engage with locals, community groups and businesses over a two-year period to identify the town's strengths, assets, challenges and opportunities for innovation and economic development.

The *Local Development Strategy* grants program is designed to be community-led and reflect local priorities and ambitions. Through the grants, communities will be able to undertake long-term diversification planning to support their local economy and adapt to new industries – increasing job opportunities for workers.

The Noojee community will also have access to the recently announced \$22 million *Community Transition and Development Fund*, which will also support communities in transition to implement new strategies.

Eleven priority communities where native timber harvesting and processing remain important sources of jobs and economic activity are eligible for funding through the Local Development Strategy grants. This project in Noojee will build on the work already underway in Orbost, Yarram and Heyfield.

The Local Development Strategy grants are a key part of the more than \$200 million 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

"We are supporting businesses and local communities to transition away from native timber harvesting, while placing the power in their hands to take control of their future, seek new opportunities and create more jobs."

Quote attributable to Baw Baw Shire Mayor Cr Michael Leaney

"We welcome this Local Development Strategy grant which will support the Noojee community to plan for a strong economic future."