

# Media Release

**The Hon Gayle Tierney MP**

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Training and Skills

Minister for Higher Education

Minister for Agriculture



Tuesday, 25 October 2022

## **MORE SUPPORT FOR TIMBER WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES**

The Andrews Labor Government is continuing to support local jobs in timber communities with applications now open for almost \$25 million in grants under the Victorian Forestry Plan.

Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney today announced the opening of three grant programs – the \$22 million Community Development Fund, the \$2.5 million second round of the Victorian Timber Innovation Fund and the \$250,000 second round of the Forestry Business Transition Voucher program.

The Labor Government's Community Development Fund will support 11 priority communities to deliver projects and opportunities identified through local transition strategies.

The communities of Orbost, Nowa Nowa, Swifts Creek, Yarram, Heyfield, Noojee, Murrindindi, Yarra Ranges, Benalla, Corryong and Koondrook will be able to access the fund over the next four years as their individual strategies progress.

The second rounds of the Victorian Timber Innovation Fund and Forestry Business Transition Vouchers will protect local jobs by giving employers the financial and professional support they need to innovate, diversify and future-proof their businesses.

Innovation grants of up to \$1 million for native timber businesses will assist the transition to alternative fibre, and support business diversification opportunities. The program's eligibility has been expanded to include sub-contractors linked to a business with a VicForests contract.

Following the success of the fully subscribed first round, the Forestry Business Transition Voucher program will offer vouchers up to \$25,000 to provide tailored business planning support to eligible native timber businesses.

The first round of both programs had a strong take up with over \$1 million in vouchers provided and innovation grants helping 10 businesses to share in \$4 million to support 13 projects – demonstrating the native timber industry's innovative thinking and willingness to embrace opportunities.

Combined, these new and existing grant rounds are investing almost \$30 million in timber communities in regional Victoria.

The Sawmill Opt-out Scheme application process is also underway to enable mills and mill workers to transition out of the industry ahead of the planned 2024 step-down in native timber harvesting.

More information on Victorian Forestry Plan business and community support is available at [vic.gov.au/forestry](https://vic.gov.au/forestry).

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney**

*"We know forestry businesses and communities are doing it tough, that's why we're delivering more programs and building on the support already available."*

*"Native timber businesses and communities are already thinking innovatively about their future and these funds will help harness those opportunities and build solid footings for Victoria's forestry industry."*

**Media contact:** Isobella Meredith 0456 306 337 | [isobella.meredith@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:isobella.meredith@minstaff.vic.gov.au)