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Diversification the Key to Recovery

In the wake of further job losses in North East Tasmania as a result of the closure of Gunns Tonganah sawmill, the Dorset Economic Development Group has called for a focus on new opportunities to diversify the region's employment base.

"The best option for the economy of North East Tasmania going forward is to ensure that new opportunities are explored, and that the process of establishing new enterprises is made as simple as possible to get new jobs online quickly" said Dorset EDG Chairman Mr. John Williams.

"Adequate funding of the local Economic Development body is a critical need if new industries are to be attracted to the region" added Mr. Williams. "Dorset EDG has the local knowledge and networks in place to help develop new opportunities, and it has a track record in dealing with regional and state based development authorities, But to do this well it needs a secure and ongoing funding commitment from Government to attract suitable staffing. Funding Dorset EDG is not a hand out for the North East, it's a hand up", said Mr. Williams, "and adequate funding gives Dorset EDG the capacity to work towards securing the future of sustainable industries in the region."

"Dorset EDG has made a significant contribution towards a regional plan to develop large scale irrigation infrastructure in Dorset, and this work is continuing steadily. The Tasmanian Government has been strongly supportive of this, and the current job losses in timber processing highlights the need to move forward quickly in bringing other jobs online. "

In addition to water development and agricultural expansion, Dorset EDG also believes the region is ideally placed to develop education and training infrastructure based around the forest industries.

"In many areas of timber industry training needs, staff from Tasmanian businesses have to travel interstate for appropriate training. With Tasmania's natural capacity to support a sustainable timber industry, it would make more sense for that training expertise to be

available here, and we could then be importing trainees instead of exporting them” said Mr. Williams. “Scottsdale is ideally placed to support a training base, with all sub-sectors of the industry operating close by. And thanks to the recent closure of businesses such as Simplot, UMT, Auspine, the Tonganah Clay Mine and more there is a range of appropriate properties available for the establishment of a training facility.”

Dorset EDG also supports Council’s calls for urgent attention to transport infrastructure improvements into the North East. “Until the goat track from Launceston to Scottsdale is upgraded to the level needed to carry heavy vehicles in and out of the region cost effectively then Scottsdale will remain unattractive to large scale industries.” commented Mr. Williams.

Contacts re this press release.

John Williams (Dorset EDG Chairman) 0419 502 355
Stephen Love (Dorset EDG Vice Chairman) 0419 522 777