



Robyn Parker MP

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Heritage

MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMUNITY INVITED TO COMMENT ON FIREWOOD AND HOME HEATING REPORT

A report on the future supply of firewood in the Riverina, compiled by the Riverina Community Firewood and Home Heating Taskforce is now open to public comment.

Environment Minister Robyn Parker said the taskforce has thoroughly examined the issues and put forward 21 recommendations.

“The report is now on exhibition for public comment, so now is the time for the community to provide feedback and let us know what they think,” Ms Parker said.

Taskforce Chair Richard Bull said the recommendations had several components.

“The taskforce has developed recommendations that seek to maximise firewood availability from national parks, improve knowledge about and access to firewood on other public lands, and a range of measures to support community members who wish to reduce energy costs.

“When national parks were created from state forests in the Riverina, the legislation allowed firewood collection to continue. With the cessation of commercial forestry in the parks and reserves, firewood, as a by-product of logging, is no longer being produced.

“This taskforce was established by the Minister for the Environment to determine what the limitations were and what future options are available.

“Firewood on parks and reserves in the Murray area will be available for a few years yet, and if the proposed ecological thinning trial receives Commonwealth approval this will add to the available resource. Supply in the Murrumbidgee area is however much tighter. Firewood also continues to be available on other land tenures.

Murray Darling MP John Williams said the recommendations were practical solutions.

“Access to firewood for home heating is an important issue for many Riverina residents. We have tried to offer practical ways of assisting the community right now.

“I encourage everyone who has an interest in this issue to read the taskforce report and recommendations, and submit comments as part of the consultation process,” Mr Williams said.

Taskforce member and Deniliquin Mayor Lindsay Renwick said that many community members have expressed a desire for natural gas to be extended from Finley through to Deniliquin and further south to the Murray.

“I have been advocating for natural gas at every opportunity, including with industry and State and Commonwealth governments. If we can get the gas to come through it will make a big difference for our communities, and not just for home heating.

“The taskforce was a good opportunity for Mayor Paul Maytom from Leeton Shire Council and I to represent the interests of our respective community members.”

The report of the Taskforce is available:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/publications/130816rivrep.htm

Submissions close on 17 January, 2014.