

the boundary would change for the electoral division of Indi.

Seventeen towns in Moira Shire are to be redistributed to Murray (proposed to be renamed Nicholls), while 18 towns in the Shire of Strathbogie and some forest area of the Yarra Ranges will be included in Indi.

The new electorate boundaries apply from July 13 and will be tabled in parliament during August. A full report on the AEC website will follow. The first election to recognise these changes will be the next federal general election, due to be held before May 18, 2019.

I am looking forward to working with the people in the Strathbogie communities of Balmattum, Baddaginnie, Boho, Boho South, Creek Junction, Creightons Creek, Earlston, Euroa, Gooram, Kelvin View, Kithbrook, Koonda, Marraweeney, Ruffy, Sheans Creek, Strathbogie, Upotipotpon and Violet Town.

It has been a privilege to represent the communities of Almonds, Boomahnoomoonah, Boweya North, Bundalong South, Lake Rowan, Pelluebla, St James, Telford, Tungamah, Waggarandall, Wattville, Wilby, Yabba North, Yabba South, Youanmite, Youarang and Yundool – I do hope these communities and individuals stay in contact.

I encourage everyone to visit my website and gain a better understanding of the Indi Way - independent federal representation benefiting rural communities.

Cathy McGowan AO MP, Independent Member for Indi

Old hospital

I KNOW the costly fence has been erected around the Alexandra Hospital. I, like many others are still waiting for an official report to be published, stating what is so wrong with the building, that it can't be repaired and used as a community asset. The public are entitled and have the right to read such a report.

Raymond Donkin, Buxton

Minister invited to discussion on forest protection

THE Rubicon Forest Protection Group has invited the Minister for the Environment, The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio, to participate in a public discussion of the State Government's forest policy and its impact on the values of the Rubicon State Forest as follows: "As we outlined to you at our meeting last year, logging in the Rubicon State Forest has accelerated in scale and intensity since the 2009 fires with the value of the Rubicon State Forest for purposes other than wood production now seriously compromised. Even in terms of wood production the current scale of harvesting is not sustainable with the remaining substantially intact areas of '39 ash regrowth expected to be logged out in perhaps as little as five years.

The causes of this crisis have been

exacerbated by the major fires of the 2000s, but have been building over many years due to past over-commitment with respect to the delivery of pulp and sawlogs and under-investment in hardwood plantations. A critical element of this crisis is the regulatory regime, including the Central Highlands Regional Forest Agreement, the Allocation Order and the Code of Forest Practice, which has failed to limit harvesting to sustainable levels.

We recognise that putting in place tighter limits and protections is difficult, both politically and financially. However, it is also urgent. Accelerated logging in the Snobs Creek Valley is now imminent; within months we can expect the devastation which has been wrought on the Royston Range and the Rubicon Valley to be reproduced in Snobs Creek Valley and across the Torbreck Range.

Our community is divided and confused. While there is widespread community concern regarding unsustainable logging and the damage being done to tourist development, there is also apprehension about the affect a logging moratorium would have on local families and businesses.

If the Murrindindi community is to contribute in the most constructive way to addressing these complex challenges we need to move beyond stereotypes and slogans. We need to work towards a shared understanding of the situation on the ground and of the different perspectives and concerns. The RFPG believes that opportunities for public information and discussion are urgently needed and a well-designed and well-facilitated public meeting would contribute to meeting this need.

We approached VicForests about their participating in such a public meeting and while they did not reject the idea, they pointed out that they are just the implementing agency and that the scale and intensity of logging in the Rubicon State Forest reflects a legislative and regulatory regime set by government.

We have already asked a number of eminent Victorians whether they may be prepared to chair such a meeting, including several retired judges and several former state environment ministers, but so far without success.

Subject to finding a suitable chairperson, we now invite you to participate in such a public meeting directed to building understanding and clarifying policy options regarding the sustainable use of the Rubicon State Forest and the protection of all of the values of this forest. We consider that such an event would be in line with your commitment to extensive consultation with scientific bodies, industry and the community to modernise the state's RFA framework and better manage Victoria's forests."

Ken Deacon, convenor Rubicon Forest Protection Group

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