

I wish to speak about the effect on our region as a result of the closure of the Triabunna Woodchip Mill and identify development and other opportunities for the Triabunna Community and the surrounding regions.

Having been born, raised, educated and have owned businesses in Triabunna and Orford I am well versed in speaking on behalf of the business community and the community in general. I am extremely passionate about our region, saddened by the lack of employment opportunities and extremely difficult times for local businesses and the community. I am determined, through a collaborative and innovative approach, that our region can turn the corner and be the thriving town it once was.

The closure of the Triabunna Woodchip Mill had an immediate impact on the Triabunna and Orford region. To say the region is in crisis would not be an understatement. Triabunna was built on the back of the forest industry with the majority of businesses and employment derived directly from forestry or as a down-stream consequence.

The local hardware, supermarket, post office, bodyworks, mechanic, in-fact nearly all businesses, were impacted and continue to struggle as a result of the closure. What were once viable businesses closed, then re-opened and closed once again.

Many residents are seeking employment, and as a consequence of three years now having passed, still remain unemployed without any foreseeable change to their circumstances. The closure of the mill ripped the heart out of the community with morale dropping to an all-time low. Families have been separated due to the need for fathers to work elsewhere in the State or Country and this has added even more pressure to a fragile region.

As individuals, businesses or as a community we had no power to change what has happened to our region. The situation we find ourselves in is at no fault of our own. This statement, however, cannot apply to Government because for many years leading up to the closure, the Mill had a limited life expectancy. What did Government do for the decade leading up to the imminent closure to prepare our region? It appears, very little.

Three years on, I have not seen a short, medium or long term strategic plan for our region that contains achievable projects and innovative and collaborative ideas for new business opportunities and employment. We do not need a strategic plan containing motherhood statements, we need the creation of jobs, jobs and more jobs and a reduction in red and green tape. We need innovation, we need collaboration, we must get on with the job. The community can only accept media releases applauding "shovel ready" projects for a limited amount of time. The promises of better times ahead can only be said so many times and eventually the community see the statements as being broken promises, they feel they have been misled and see no change on the horizon.

In my opinion, the region requires investigation in to new opportunities for employment and businesses for the future. As a regional community and due to logistics and costs, it is unlikely that this area will encourage larger industries that employ a significant amount of residents, instead it appears more likely that tourism and small to medium enterprises that focus on quality and niche markets will be the answer.

The Orford Triabunna Chamber of Commerce has been working with in excess of fifty local businesses and not for profit organisations to create a new or improved digital presence. New or improved websites or web-pages will be linked to the Chambers new Directory of Business and Services for our region. The purpose of the Directory is to showcase not only our businesses, but also the beauty of our region such as the beaches, walks and history and link to East Coast Tourism Organisation and Discover Tasmania. We are preparing for future development and ensuring our businesses have the digital exposure they will need to be noticed and engaged to carry-out the works on offer.

The Spring Bay deep port is a significant natural resource for the region and State. The wharf facilities previously used by Gunns could be investigated to allow for new opportunities for existing and new businesses in-turn creating employment and economic growth.

Whilst the existing wharf facility in its current form has limited use, a future multi-purpose wharf structure could deliver the infrastructure needed for this region to rebuild.

We would like Government to investigate possible future use of the deep water port along with improved wharf infrastructure.

Some possible ideas for future use are listed below:-

➤ Ferry terminal – collection and drop-off point

Potential destinations:-

- Maria Island
- Eco Tours
- Wineglass Bay Tours

Potential benefits:-

- Increased visitation to the East Coast including Spring Bay Mill, Maria Island, Orford and Triabunna
- Increased accommodation needs
- New job opportunities
- New or expanded existing tourism business opportunities
- Increased purchases locally of fuel, etc, by operators and visitors

➤ Cruise Ships - Ferry Terminal (transferred by small craft from cruise ship)

Potential destinations:-

- Spring Bay Mill
- Maria Island
- East Coast Eco Tours
- Wineglass Bay Tours
- East Coast of Tasmania Day Trips (Road)

- Shuttle busses available throughout the region for example to Triabunna/Orford area for a guided tour (The Thumbs, Old Convict Road, Sandstone Quarry, local wines & seafood)

Potential benefits:-

- Increased visitation to the East Coast including Spring Bay Mill, Orford and Triabunna
- New job opportunities
- New or expanded existing tourism business opportunities
- Increased business for local restaurants, shops, etc
- New business opportunities for premium local seafood businesses

➤ Commercial Fishing Vessel Unloading/Loading/Repairs & Maintenance/Processing

Potential users

- Larger commercial fishing vessels (Tasmanian and Mainland Vessels)

Potential benefits

- Fuel suppliers
- Stores (food) sales
- Hardware sales
- Repairs & maintenance (local marine welders)
- Slipway – increased use & potential upgrade for increased size of vessels currently catered for
- Freight businesses
- Provedore
- Unloading of catch
- Opportunity to process seafood caught in Tasmanian Waters in Triabunna instead of sending to the Mainland to process
- Reduce congestion at Council owned wharf whereby larger vessel are not permitted

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➤ Sydney to Triabunna Fast Ferry

- Conduct a feasibility study