

Tuesday, January 15 2008

### FOREST INDUSTRY ON FIRE FRONTLINE

The Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) believes the extensive damage caused by the current bushfires across Victoria could have been lessened by allowing the forest industry to operate at sustainable levels.

The VAFI Executive Director, Phillip Dalidakis, has praised the efforts of CFA volunteers but said their job was made significantly more difficult as a result of previous decisions based on emotion and not science.

“As a result of previous decisions incorrectly locking up State forests, we now have an increasingly frustrating and dangerous situation at hand,” Mr Dalidakis said.

“Our CFA fire-fighters, many of whom work in the timber industry, are now fighting fires of greater intensity and increased difficulty due to a build up of fuel in unmanaged areas.”

Mr Dalidakis was also critical of environmental groups that fail to recognise the dangerous realities of their policies and the lack of scientific rigour in their public positions.

“Whilst Green groups continue to pressure the government into locking up more and more forest area, the science is in, and sustainable forestry is the answer to fighting climate change and providing fuel reduction,” Mr Dalidakis said.

“Tragic lessons from devastating fires in recent years have shown that when the forest industry is removed from surrounding areas, the ability to fight these fires is greatly reduced.

“Forestry workers are primary sources of forest knowledge and fire fighting experience; the recent death of Steve Jamieson is a tragic reminder that it is our industry on the frontline protecting our forest area for future generations”.

-ends-

**MEDIA CONTACT: JOHN LISTON**

Ph: (03) 9611 9005 Mobile: 0400 956 741 Email: [jliston@vafi.org.au](mailto:jliston@vafi.org.au) Internet: [www.vafi.org.au](http://www.vafi.org.au)