



# VAFI

## VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES

Monday, 3 November, 2008

### TIMBER INDUSTRY CRUCIAL TO CATCHMENT PROTECTION

The Victorian timber industry will be on the forefront of the battle to save Melbourne's water supply this fire season after Victoria's forests endured the lowest Spring rainfall on record according to the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI).

The recently released 2008-09 Seasonal Bushfire Assessment from the Bureau of Meteorology has labelled Victoria's forests as a "tinderbox" and identified the far-east Gippsland and Melbourne water catchments as "areas of particular concern", a statement the VAFI CEO, Philip Dalidakis, says reaffirms the timber industry's ongoing warnings about the area.

"Whilst continued campaigns from environmental groups and local councils have demonised the timber industry as a major threat to water supply, both science and common sense clearly shows that fire is our number one enemy," Mr Dalidakis said.

"The Victorian timber industry continues to maintain that without an ongoing industry presence in the area to maintain fire tracks, reduce fuel loads, and provide fire fighting vehicles and personal; the catchments would be defenceless against the imminent threat of wild fire."

An independent report released by the VAFI in March this year warned that a fire in Melbourne's water catchments is inevitable and our ability to fight it is dependant on proactive forest management policies, which includes a timber industry presence.

"You only need to look at the 2003 Alpine bushfires which burnt over 1 million hectares of forest area in 59 days to understand how much devastation a fire can wreak in a dry Summer period," Mr Dalidakis said.

"When you compare that fire to the 306 hectares of forest within the Melbourne catchment that is sustainably harvested and regrown annually, it becomes clear that fire is the real threat to Melbourne's water supply."

"We can only hope that it's the hot air of the environmental groups that we have to deal with this summer and not hot fires because the fact remains that it won't be their vehicles, their machinery or their fathers and brothers on the frontline, it will be the timber industry's."

Victoria's fire season begins today.

**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)

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