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Timber industry has nothing to fear from talks

The peak representative body for the Victorian timber industry, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI), said there is nothing to fear from Labor Party policy that calls for talks on the future of forestry in Victoria.

VAFI CEO Philip Dalidakis said if the Labor Party was re-elected, the industry would welcome the opportunity to enter into a constructive discussion concerning the future of both native and plantation forestry in Victoria.

“These discussions should recognise the significant social, economic and environmental benefits provided by both the plantation and native forest industry to the community,” Mr Dalidakis said.

“This includes approximately 10,000 jobs in rural and regional towns that rely on forestry as well as the tens of thousands indirect Victorian jobs supported by the industry.”

“Let’s be clear, our position is that the proposed talks should not be seen as a vehicle to close down the native or plantation forestry industry, but rather ensure the long-term future of the industry.”

Mr Dalidakis said that while the discussions that occurred in Tasmania may act as a model, it must be recognised that there are significant differences between how the industry operates there and in Victoria.

He also welcomed the potential involvement of other stakeholders, such as Environment Victoria, WWF and Greenpeace, as well as the CMFEU and Timber Communities Australia.

“We believe all relevant stakeholders should be involved to provide these discussions with the social licence they will require to be effective,” Mr Dalidakis said.

However, he expressed concern that some groups who had continually and wilfully misled the public about the positive role of the native and plantation forestry industry may request participation in the talks.

“Any groups that wish to be involved in these discussions would need to start a new and honest dialogue with the wider community, to establish good faith in the negotiations of all parties concerned,” he said.

“Some groups have continually and wilfully misled the public over the positive role that forestry actually plays across Victoria, and we have concerns that unless they



VAFI

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES

are prepared to acknowledge their indiscretions, good faith in the talks will be difficult to establish.

“Any groups involved in these discussions must be committed to a constructive dialogue aimed at the development of a plan for a sustainable supply of timber and paper products to satisfy community needs.”

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MEDIA RELEASE