

Monday, 22 November 2010

### Greens' endanger 10,000 country jobs

The peak representative body for the Victorian timber industry, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI), has announced it would encourage voters to put the Greens last on their ballot papers.

VAFI CEO Philip Dalidakis said the Greens championed a range of policies that if enacted would destabilise the Victorian economy and lead to significant increases in unemployment.

"Our Association believes a vote for the Greens is a vote to endanger 10,000 country jobs," Mr Dalidakis said.

"The Greens have outlined a range of forestry policies that include shutting down the majority of the industry, with little thought for the jobs this would destroy, the families it could tear apart and the communities it would effectively end."

The Greens' policies for forestry include:<sup>1</sup>

- *Establishing appropriate transition arrangements (maximum 5 years) to the use of plantation and recycled timbers only;*
- *Immediately ending the logging of high conservation value forests;*
- *Immediately ending logging in town water catchments;*
- *Immediately ending harvesting native forests for woodchips;*
- *Restoring plantations in town water catchments or environmentally inappropriate places back to native forests or farmland after completion of the first cutting cycle;*
- *Ending the provision of short term tax incentives for MIS schemes;*
- *Ending plantations for carbon sequestration.*

Mr Dalidakis said these policies were contradictory and completely unrealistic.

"Currently the Victorian timber industry directly employs around 24,000 people and indirectly supports approximately another 50,000 jobs," he said.

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<sup>1</sup> All Greens forestry policies taken from <http://vic.greens.org.au/policies/forests> on 18/11/2010.

## VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES

“It should not be controversial to say that such a policy may endanger some of these jobs and may possibly involve the devastation of a number of small regional communities that rely on forestry to remain viable.”

Mr Dalidakis also criticised the Greens proposed plantation solution, which he said was widely unrealistic and highly contradictory.

“Existing plantation-grown timbers cannot substitute all timber supplied from native forests and new plantations cannot be grown in the five years the Greens claim it will take to make the transition,” Mr Dalidakis said.

“Just to replace the sawlog quality timber grown in the Melbourne water catchment with plantations would require an additional 21,000 hectares of land in Gippsland, \$170 million of investment, and a minimum of 30 years for the trees to grow.”<sup>2</sup>

“The Greens’ plantation policy will also almost certainly make their native forestry policy unworkable.”

Mr Dalidakis said the Greens’ policies to end MIS would not only make it more difficult to establish new plantations, it would also mean the end of many existing plantations once they are harvested.

“Plantation development in Victoria is already declining and the Greens’ policies to remove financial incentives for new plantations and tighten restrictions on where they can be developed or replanted will destroy the plantation forestry industry altogether,” Mr Dalidakis said.

“The question has to be, if we don’t harvest native forests and we strangle the plantation industry, where are we going to get the timber and paper products Victorians demand?”

The industry employment figures are derived from a State Government commissioned report authored by independent academics.<sup>3</sup> This report highlights that almost 10,000 forestry jobs are located in rural and regional areas.

Mr Dalidakis said many rural and regional towns relied on the industry for a substantial proportion of their employment, such as Dartmoor (73.08% of all employment), Heyfield (56.65%), Cann River (41.7%) and Rosedale (25.21%).<sup>4</sup>

“If the Greens get their wish, these towns and many like them will have their heart and soul ripped out,” Mr Dalidakis said.

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<sup>2</sup> MBAC Feasibility of plantations substituting for timber currently harvested from Melbourne’s water catchments  
[http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0014/12713/TimberSubstitutionPart1.pdf](http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/12713/TimberSubstitutionPart1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> J. Schirmer, 2010 *Socio-economic characteristics of Victoria’s forestry industries*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* Part 3: Dependence of Victorian towns and localities on the forest industry p. 11