

Monday, December 3 2007

WILDERNESS SOCIETY BETRAYS ENVIRONMENT

The Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) has criticised a Wilderness Society statement that claims native forest logging contributes to climate change as misinformed and deceitful.

A statement released today by the Wilderness Society claims logging by the Victorian forest industry destroys carbon stores and contributes to climate change, a point the VAFI Executive Director Philip Dalidakis says couldn't be further from the truth.

"It is very disappointing to see an organisation that claims to promote the best interests of the environment show such a clear lack of understanding on such an important issue," Mr Dalidakis said.

"The Wilderness Society continues to ignore the fact that carbon continues to be stored in wood products hundreds of years after it is harvested and that Australian sustainable forestry practices ensures that forests are regenerated and replanted".

"Native forests account for 99.2% of carbon storage and by sustainably managing them we are actually removing more carbon than by simply locking them up," Mr Dalidakis said.

Mr Dalidakis also expressed concern for the increased fire threat that would result from further restriction of forest resources.

"If you lock out the forestry industry further you are effectively increasing the potential danger of forest wildfires. Forest fuel then accumulates, roads and firebreaks are not maintained, and controlled burn-offs would not be carried out," Mr Dalidakis said.

"When you consider that 40 million tonnes of CO₂, or the equivalent of nine million cars on the road for one year, was emitted in the 2006/07 Victorian bushfire season you begin to grasp the ramifications that a wildfire can have in an access restricted forest".

"The Wilderness Society needs to check its facts more closely before making wildly inaccurate and damaging claims that endanger the environment and the safety of all Victorians."

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