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Building a sustainable forest industry for Victoria

The peak representative body for the Victorian timber industry, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI), has released a 10 point plan to secure a sustainable forest industry for Victoria's future.

VAFI CEO Philip Dalidakis said the local timber industry was an important employer throughout Victoria, particularly in the regions, creating 24,000 jobs and generating a sales and services income of \$6.5 billion each year.

"The forest industries play a vital role in providing jobs and securing the social and economic sustainability of communities throughout our State," he said.

"It also plays a pivotal role in fire mitigation."

The VAFI's 10 point plan for a sustainable forest industry is:

1. A commitment to 20 year Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs), renewed every five years;
2. Chain of Custody environmental certification requirement for all VicForest customers;
3. Support for biomass power generation;
4. A mandated environmental procurement policy focusing on internationally recognised certification for all State Government timber and paper products;
5. The expanded use of environmental thinning for the management of all Victorian public forests, including in State and National Parks;
6. The use of plantation mapping to help make more informed decisions on the establishment of new plantations;
7. The development of a long-term hardwood plantation growth strategy;
8. Improved governance of the forestry industry through reforms to the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and VicForests;
9. Increased support for education and training relevant to the forestry industry; and
10. Research and development with a bio-security focus.

VAFI

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES

Mr Dalidakis said wood could be used for a variety of purposes, such as building houses for Victoria's growing population in a more environmentally friendly way.

"The average steel-framed home emits 2.9 tonnes of carbon, compared to a wood-framed house which stores approximately 7.5 tonnes," he said.

"Timber is one of the most environmentally friendly products available: it is renewable, recyclable, energy efficient to produce and it continues to store carbon for not only the life of the product, but in many cases much longer.

"Forestry remains an innovative 21st century business, creating jobs and providing Victoria with renewable energy, sustainable building products and the raw materials that make modern living possible."

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For a copy of the VAFI election policy framework, see
<http://www.vafi.org.au/election2010>