



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **PLANTATIONS- GET IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME**

With the State Government moving back into the plantation sector it exited more than 20 years ago, forest industry experts are urging the government to consider utilising the experience and expertise of the private sector.

The government recently announced it would plant 550 hectares of blue gum trees on crown land in Gippsland, land which was previously leased to a well-established and successful private plantation company in the area.

VicForests, the government-owned agency responsible for supplying hardwood timber from State forests, will now make the move into plantations, taking on the role of establishing and managing the new plantations.

“A partnership with plantation forestry firms could seriously augment the \$110 million being offered by the government, which would ultimately deliver a far better outcome.” CEO of the Victorian Association of Forest Industries Inc. (VAFI) Tim Johnston, said.

“Plantation management is a highly specialised field and the government should be in discussion with existing industry operators as site and species selection is crucial. These new plantations will need considerable management expertise,” he said.

If the new trees do successfully establish, the government’s 550 hectares simply replaces what had already been under plantation. Victoria has an existing hardwood estate of 196,300 hectares so this will not be at all sufficient to meet the growing demand for high quality fibre resource.

In the past 11 years the direct economic contribution of hardwood plantation and pulpwood production to the Victorian state economy has multiplied by 14, from \$21 million per annum in 2006/7 to \$302 million per annum in 2016/17.

“This is because private plantation owners and managers have the skill and expertise to seek investment and funding opportunities and capitalise on their investment,” Mr Johnston said.

“We urge the government to work collaboratively with industry experts, understand the complexities involved, and support private enterprise in helping deliver additional fibre resource.”

**ENDS**