

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOREST PROTESTORS DEFY ANDREWS LOCK DOWN LAWS WITH IMPUNITY PUTTING LIVES AT RISK

Despite clear legal prohibitions, protestors in Victoria continue to interfere with legal forestry operations by entering worksites.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Ross Hampton said, “Our State and Federal Governments have quite rightly designated all forest industries ‘essential’ as the products which we gain from forestry underpin many aspects of modern life.”

“The combined sectors of native and plantation forestry in this country supplies everything from toilet tissue and cardboard for food packaging, to the pallets vital for moving groceries into our supermarkets, to the pine framing and appearance grade hardwood without which home construction would grind to a halt. Australian forest industries do all this and, yet the native sector, which is the target of some activists, only accesses about 4 trees out of 10,000 each year – and every tree used is regenerated and regrown by law.”

“All our forestry is completely sustainable and certified to world’s best global standards. At a time when treasury forecasts are pointing to the CoVid-19 pandemic leaving perhaps a million of our fellow Australians on the unemployment queues, it’s appalling that a small number of protestors seem determined to drive thousands more into unemployment by making it impossible for them to do their legitimate jobs.”

The General Manager of the Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA) Stacey Gardiner said harvest contractors, abiding by social distancing and workplace safety, are being halted by protestors who appear to think the same rules don’t apply to them.

“It’s contractors and their staff who are working legally and abiding by the rules,” Ms Gardiner said.

“They’re making sure they keep their employees safe, but the behaviour of protestors is abhorrent, and they have no regard for workplace safety. Worse still there doesn’t appear to be any willingness on the part of authorities to stop them.”

The Chief Executive of the Victorian Association of Forest Industries inc (VAFI) Tim Johnston said, “People who choose to disrupt legal timber harvesting operations put themselves and others at risk.”

“There are a range of offences and penalties for these dangerous actions, reflecting the seriousness of the situation. Despite this, the government has consistently dragged its feet on enforcing these penalties and coupes remain closed for days or weeks on end.”

“These are the same forest contractors that are asked by the State Government to risk their lives and fight bushfires. They should be allowed to go about their livelihoods, and simply deserve better,” Mr Johnston concluded.

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