

Media Release



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No native timber harvesting equals thousands of jobs lost

Media reports of a proposal to phase out of native timber harvesting will see the loss of thousands of jobs across Victoria and will see even more stress placed on regional Victoria, according to the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI).

Mr Tim Johnston, Chief Executive Officer of VAFI, said today's media report that the State Government is proposing to end native timber harvesting by 2029 will have devastating consequences for the industry, which in turn will have a direct impact socially and economically for all of Victoria.

"I am beyond angry and disappointed if the government considers turning its back on our industry, one which generates more than \$7.3 billion in sales and service income for the state of Victoria."

"We have real jobs on the ground now, and the impact will be felt immediately. There is no policy, no plan in place for businesses, there is no guarantee that the workers will get another job, there has been no thought behind this decision at all. This is the move of a government to appease inner-city voters. They've forgotten about regional Victoria," he said.

"People need to be aware that ending native timber harvesting has real consequences, and this will impact on the lives of thousands of Victorians. It will see regional communities that rely on the timber and forestry industry really struggling to survive."

Mr Johnston said that despite the industry being committed to working constructively with the Government and stakeholders to maintain the balance between environmental considerations and the sustainable native timber industry in Victoria, there has been no consultation on such a proposal before this media report.

"Do I need to remind the government that only last year they bought into a sawmill? If they are not invested in the future of the industry, then that was nothing but a waste."

"Our industry directly employs thousands of workers, and tens of thousands more through flow on activity. We need forestry, tourism, and any other small industries to ensure a resilient and vibrant future for these communities and all Victorians," Mr Johnston said.

Note: 94% of the state forest is already unavailable or unsuitable for timber harvesting. Currently timber harvesting occurs in just 0.04% of the forest annually and harvested timber is replanted and regenerated the following year.

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MEDIA CONTACT: NATALIE KIMBER

Ph: (03) **9611 9000** Mobile: **0401 757 172** Email: nkimber@vafi.org.au Website: www.vafi.org.au