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Budget 2015- forest products industry looking to the future

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has welcomed the federal 2015 budget but looks to 2016 for more direct investment in positioning the forest and forest products industries as part of a renewed national economy.

Chief Executive Officer Mr Ross Hampton said, “The Abbott Government has framed a budget designed to deliver reassurance to the broad electorate that rapid change is off the agenda and resigned itself to a slower trajectory back to the black.”

“There are positive measures in this budget for business – especially small and medium sized operations. Infrastructure spending, including new roads funding will be good news right across the country.”

“The inclusion in the budget of \$1.5 million for a biomass removal trials project for bushfire reduction announced by the Prime Minister at the forest industries Gala Dinner in March is welcome. As is the opportunity for investment via the next round of contested grants under the \$100 million Rural R&D for Profit Programme. “

“The Abbott Government is rightly demonstrating a commitment to agriculture with new funding of some \$400 million announced in the budget and apparently more to flow through the Agriculture White Paper process.”

“Our forestry and fibre industries deserve similar attention. The Forest Industry Advisory Council discussion paper process, launched and overseen by Parliamentary Secretary Senator Richard Colbeck, is a great start. However this process will be for naught if the Government does not provide its own ‘National Forestry and Fibre Plan’, with necessary funding to ensure it happens.”

Our national fibre industries employ some 120,000 people (including those involved in timber frame and furniture making) and generates \$22 billion a year. They have the potential to grow dramatically in a carbon constrained global economy which is placing a premium on being renewable and sustainable, but only if we are working to a cogent, nationally agreed plan with funding to drive towards specific goals.

AFPA represents forest growers, harvesters, and manufacturers of timber and paper products.

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