

20 September 2015

Prime Minister Turnbull misses chance to promote forestry to front line in the fight for jobs

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has expressed disappointment that, in delivering such a wholesale reshuffle of Government portfolio responsibilities, Prime Minister Turnbull has failed to re-instate a full Minister with responsibility for the forest and forest products industry.

Chief Executive Officer of AFPA Mr Ross Hampton said, "This is a missed opportunity to provide the focus and authority which would help drive the forest industries of Australia to their full potential. Our forestry and forest products industries – from tree growing and processing to pulp and paper making – already employ some 120,000 people across the value chain and add \$21 billion to the national economy."

"In a carbon-constrained global economy, with renewable, recyclable resources at a premium, forestry – like agriculture more broadly – is one of the few sectors of the economy which has the potential to grow jobs and export income in the wake of the mining slow down."

"To ensure this happens across such a diverse, but integrated, value-chain, which is impacted by the portfolios of Environment, Industry, Resources, Trade, Regional Development and Agriculture, requires a co-ordinated government approach."

"This would be much more likely if the Government contributed an independent Ministry for the Forestry and Forest Products Industry."

"The Government needs to demonstrate that it does understand the importance of our national forest fibre industries – especially as it has continued with the ill-advised name change from the 'Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry' to the 'Department of Agriculture' (now with the addition of Water Resources). AFPA will continue to argue that jettisoning Forestry and Fisheries from the name of the Department was an error which suggested a downgrading of the Government view of these sectors. This must be corrected."

AFPA congratulates the Hon Barnaby Joyce on his reappointment as Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and also welcomes to the portfolio as Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources South Australian Senator Anne Ruston.

Senator Richard Colbeck has been promoted from Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture to Assistant Minister for Tourism and International Education.

Mr Hampton said, "Senator Colbeck was a tireless advocate for the forest industries of Australia. One of his key achievements was the establishment, and driving forward, of the Forest Industries

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

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Advisory Council (FIAC). FIAC is nearing the completion of its work and is poised to deliver a report which will demand a fulsome Government response”.

“It is vital that the sector hear in the very near term that this important undertaking, into which senior industry players have invested many hours of work and which has received submissions from all over Australia, will come to timely fruition. The sector will be looking to Government for the key recommendations of the FIAC process to find a home,” said Mr Hampton.

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