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Forest industries stand with independent trucking families

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) added its voice to those of the National Farmers Federation, the Council of Small Business Australia, the Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association and the Australian Industry Group in supporting the independent transport contracting families in their dispute with the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal (RSRT).

AFPA CEO, Mr Ross Hampton said, "The RSRT has seemingly allowed a laudable goal of increasing safety to trump the fundamental principle that small business families in this country have a right to manage their affairs without unnecessary government interference."

"The RSRT 'order' regarding minimum set rates of pay is baffling because all transport operators - including those operating in forest industries - already must comply with operational standards and very high safety regulations, including chain of responsibility and fatigue management, which are enforced by the relevant authorities, both at the national and state level. The RSRT enforced pay rates are unnecessary and will drive out competition."

"This ruling is at odds with Australia's open market economy," said Mr Hampton.

Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA) Chairman, Mr Ian Reid said "The forest products haulage industry has different characteristics to other haulage tasks. A 'one-size-fits-all' rate setting approach will not reflect the nuances of our businesses, including variable products, haulage distances, road quality and average speeds."

"This change could result in lower productivity, lower profitability, and potentially the exit of some haulage contractors - with no obvious improvement in safety," said Mr Reid.

AFCA is the national body for forest harvest and haulage contractors. AFCA is a member of AFPA.

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

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