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Forest industry welcomes positive progress on recovery of Leadbeater's Possum

The peak national body for the forest, wood and paper products industry has welcomed the release by the Victorian Government of the positive outcomes contained in the *Supporting the Recovery of the Leadbeater's Possum: Progress Report*.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Ross Hampton, said "This progress report demonstrates the tangible and practical outcomes being achieved for the recovery of the possum through the implementation of the recommendations from the state-level Leadbeater's Possum Advisory Group".

"It is particularly exciting to see the positive progress in identifying 71 new Leadbeater's Possum colonies. The other new development is the growing information on the occupancy and use of nesting boxes and artificially created hollows by possums".

"The Victorian state agencies are to be commended for their ongoing surveillance work to identify new nesting colonies and put in place appropriate management strategies. This includes the amendments to the forest management zoning scheme to provide additional buffers to protect colonies through 200 metre Special Protection Zones".

"The fact that new colonies are being found in state forests where timber harvesting is permitted attests to the highest standards of sustainable forest management in these areas. This bodes well for the future not only for the possum – but also the forest industry workers and businesses that rely on the Central Highlands region. The naturally regrowing forests in the region support thousands of jobs in the forestry, wood and paper products value chain".

"AFPA supports evidence based and practical implementation of actions to support the recovery process for the Leadbeater's Possum, and these results suggest very good progress is being made", said Mr Hampton.

"These results will also provide important input into the Recovery Plan for the Leadbeater's Possum being developed by the Australian Government in consultation with Victoria. More surveys in both Parks and State forests, for example, would be a practical step forward that could be considered by the Commonwealth".

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

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