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Forest industries say include Greens in Leaders Debate

The peak industry group representing the forestry and forest product industries agrees that the Australian Greens should be included in the election 'Leaders Debates'.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Mr Ross Hampton said, "The Greens are the third force in Australian politics and should be heard and questioned. Forest industries have had a long, and at times fraught, relationship with the Greens. However, that appears to be changing, at least in relation to plantation timber. Our differences remain when it comes to natural forests."

"The highest environmental calling of the Greens is addressing climate change. As we are the sector which is able to make the greatest positive contribution to that issue our dialogue is becoming more pragmatic and positive. From discussions I have had with the three major parties there is even a possibility that the Greens will outscore both Labor and the Coalition in this campaign, when it comes to policies which drive the utilisation of forestry in carbon abatement targets."

"Labor is yet to say where it stands and the methodology to allow plantations to participate in the Emissions Reduction Fund has disappointingly failed to see the light of day after two and half years under the Liberal/National Coalition," said Mr Hampton.

AFPA is holding its own political *Great Debate* at the National Press Club on the evening of June 1. The Greens, the ALP and the Coalition are participating.

The speakers will be "live polled" and the event will be streamed to the world via YouTube.

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

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